

The Austin CIVIL WAR Round Table



April 2010

Program Details

April 15th

Dinner: 6:30 p.m.

Program: 7:15 p.m.

Location

Tarrytown United Methodist
2601 Exposition Blvd.

Rations

Rosemary Chicken
Alfredo Pasta
Assorted Spring Vegetables
Tossed Salad, Rolls
Chocolate Cake
Coffee, Tea, and Water

Meal: \$15

Meeting only: Members – \$5
Nonmembers – 1st meeting
FREE, \$10 thereafter.

Reservations

**YOU MUST RSVP
FOR DINNER!**

Contact our electronic
mailbox by telephone:

**916-3412 by Noon,
Tuesday, April 13th**

(ACWRT must pay for all meals, so if you make reservations but do not show up, you will have to pay for the meal unless you cancel 48 hours in advance.)

Program/Speaker

CONFEDERATE STRUGGLE FOR COMMAND: LONGSTREET AND THE FIRST CORPS IN THE WEST

Presented by

Alexander Mendoza

While I am so constituted, temperamentally, as to have viewed the great struggle then as I view it now, I do not know that others might have so regarded it at the earlier periods to which I refer. I believe that now, more fully than then, the public is ready to receive, in the spirit in which it is written, the story which I present.

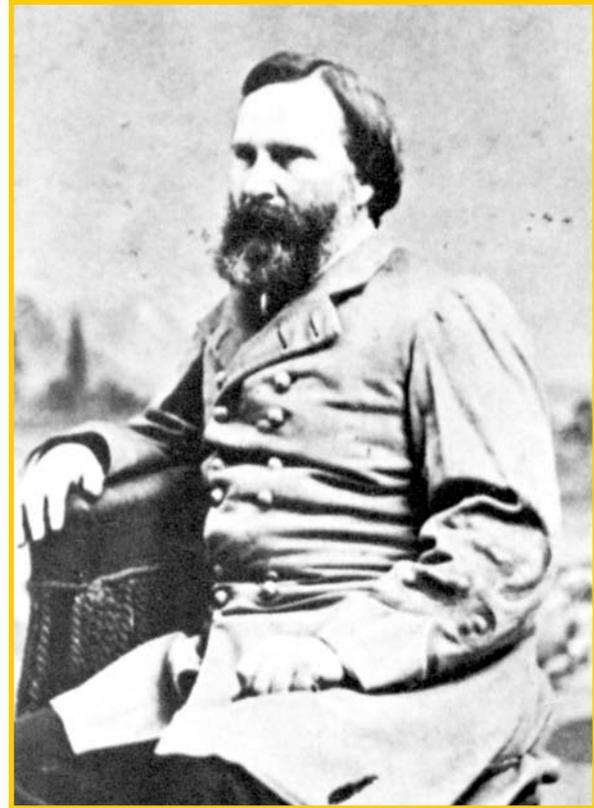
– James Longstreet,
From Manassas to Appomattox (1895)

With a passing reference to his critics, James Longstreet acknowledged his steadfast belief in the soundness of his war

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record and the controversy surrounding that record. He certainly did know that “others” had a profoundly different view of his war service, and his 700-hundred-page memoir, *From Manassas to Appomattox*, would be his attempt at personal justification; however, a hundred years would pass before the grip of the Lost Cause public-relations juggernaut loosened enough for a serious renovation of Longstreet’s tarnished image. While not a complete biography, William Garrett Piston’s *Lee’s Tarnished Lieutenant* (1987) served to soften the public image of Longstreet as a Southern Judas. Proving that distance is a key component in the discipline of writing history, Alexander Mendoza has written a balanced study of Longstreet’s service in the west. His portrait of Longstreet, *Confederate Struggle for Command: General James Longstreet and the First Corp in the West* (Texas A&M Press, 2008), explores the politics of Confederate command, Longstreet’s ambitions and motivations, and how Longstreet dealt with the contagion of dysfunctional command in the west.

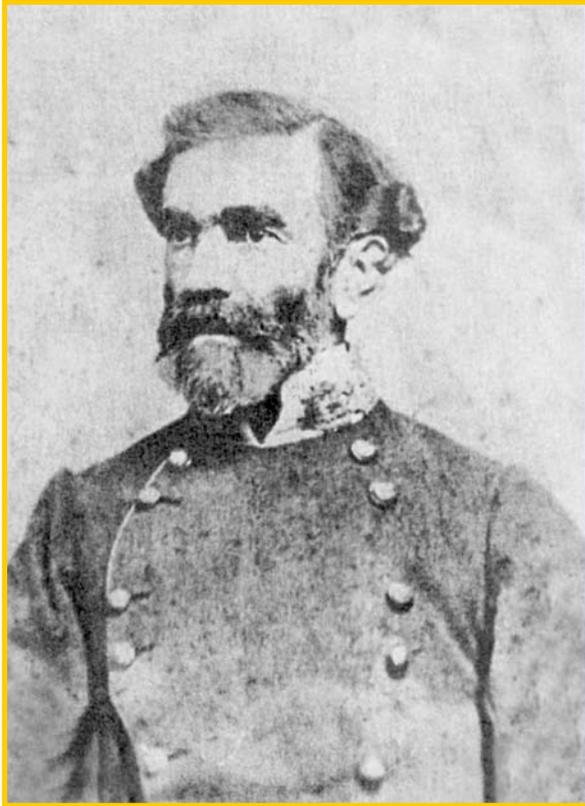
In his opening chapter, Mendoza notes that Longstreet possessed a set of complicated character traits. He was loyal to his commanding officers — particularly Joe Johnston, who covered for Longstreet’s mistakes during the Battle of Seven Pines, and later to Robert E. Lee. As a rising star in the Confederate ranks, though, Longstreet never mastered dealing with powerful politicians. First, he made the mistake of giving his unvarnished opinion to President Jefferson Davis. Also, to promote one of his own aims, a concentration of western forces, he corresponded with anti-Davis politicians like Texas Senator Louis T. Wigfall. Indeed, Longstreet never seemed to understand the consequences of entering the political fray; his political dealings would come back to haunt him during the war and later would serve to give credence to the claim that Longstreet was difficult, brooding, and petulant.



James Longstreet, probably taken post-war in New Orleans

However, as Mendoza points out, Longstreet was not the only Confederate general to seek political allies in advancing his military views. None other than Stonewall Jackson had done the same, but in openly allying himself with Joseph Johnston and in criticizing Braxton Bragg, Longstreet unthinkingly set himself against President Davis, who favored Bragg. If, as some critics have charged, Longstreet was manipulating to gain overall command in the west, he did a poor job of winning friends and influencing people. No matter how earnest he may have been in advocating a surge in the west, from the beginning he undermined that goal by misreading the dimensions of the political scene in Richmond.

One might argue that Longstreet’s rise coincided with difficulties already present in Confederate command, a situation for which Davis



Braxton Bragg, whom Longstreet sought to have relieved of his command

was ultimately responsible; however, as Mendoza argues, Longstreet made a bad situation worse by openly and whole-heartedly joining the chorus against Bragg. Once in the west, Longstreet allied himself with Bragg's own officers against the commanding general. Skirting insubordination and mutiny, he openly called for Bragg's ouster and with a cabal of other officers signed a petition to that effect. Longstreet felt that Bragg was responsible for wasting a Confederate victory at Chickamauga. Moreover, he had witnessed first-hand Bragg's egregious lack of communication with his officers, his heavy-handed discipline, and his off-putting personality. Faced with a man so ill-equipped for command, Longstreet was expected by the men of his First Corps and the Army of Tennessee to act, but, as Mendoza argues, he severely overstepped the bounds of military decorum, ulti-

mately hurting his own chances at effective command.

The imbroglio within Bragg's command resulted in the commanding general seeking Davis's permission to remove several of his officers. This occurred at a time when the Confederates should have been capitalizing on their victory at Chickamauga. Instead, the in-fighting occupied most of their attention. To superintend the malcontents, President Davis visited the army while it ostensibly held a siege at Chattanooga. In an open forum, he asked each officer to give his opinion of Bragg. The results were devastating: Bragg was universally denounced by his men; Longstreet, a key figure for any Confederate success in the west, was placed at the forefront of the intrigue; and Davis, unbending, persisted in supporting Bragg.

Unfortunately for Longstreet, the example set during the strife was also destructive to his own officers' conduct. First, Longstreet found himself having to referee a running feud between Evander Law and Micah Jenkins over who would succeed the wounded John Bell Hood. Second, the general became embroiled in disputes with Jerome Robertson and Lafayette McLaws over battlefield performance and sought their removal, much as Bragg had done with his alleged shirkers. Additionally, the carping with Jefferson Davis also increased, which wore on Longstreet's confidence in the field, as he learned what it felt like to be second-guessed at every turn.

In his conclusion, Mendoza argues that in many ways Longstreet's performance in the west can be judged a failure, but his loyalty to the Confederacy and the army is not at issue. (This red herring would surface post-war with the ascendancy of Lost Cause rhetoric.) He was strong-willed and opinionated, which sometimes hurt him politically, but those traits do not equate to an undermining petulance. Also, his

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level of ambition was not out of line with his service record, and his goal of a strategic western concentration was sound; however, when Longstreet left the relative good order of Lee's command and entered the hornet's nest of

Bragg's army, he was constitutionally unprepared to deal with a dysfunctional command and win a war, too. ★

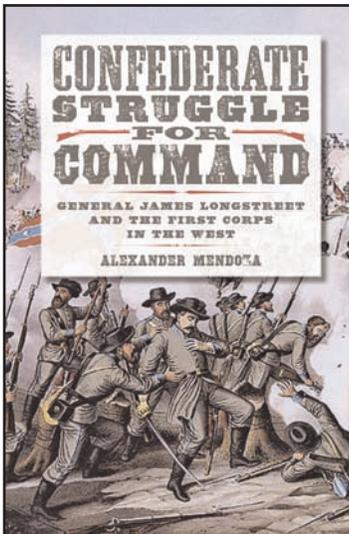
Contributed by Larry Barkley

★ The Speaker: Alexander Mendoza ★

Alexander Mendoza is an assistant professor of history at the University of Texas at Tyler, specializing in the early 19th century, Texas, and the South. He has taught courses on the American South, the U.S. military, and Civil War and Reconstruction. He earned his bachelor's degree from the University of Texas at Austin and his doctorate from Texas Tech University. In 2007, Dr. Mendoza was a Burress Distinguished Lecturer at Howard Payne University. His book *Confederate Struggle for Command* was the winner of the 2009 East Tennessee Historical Society Award of Distinction. He

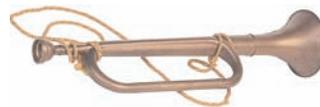
has contributed essays to *The Shiloh Campaign* (2009), edited by Steven E. Woodworth, and to *The Fate of Texas: The Civil War and the Lone Star State* (2008). His chapter titled "The Harmony and Subordination Essential for Success': Generals James Longstreet and Braxton Bragg in the Western Theater," will appear in *Confederate Generals in the Western Theater*, edited by Lawrence Lee Hewitt and Art Bergeron, to be published this year. He is also co-editing an anthology with Charles D. Grear on the diverse roles of Texans in military conflicts.

CONFEDERATE STRUGGLE FOR COMMAND



Will Be Available for Sale at the April Meeting. Price: \$25.00

Please pay with check or cash.



In Memoriam

We note with great sadness the passing of ACWRT member

George O'Kelley



Recovering Norman Brown

from a broken leg; visits, cards, calls welcome Rm. 305, St. David's Rehabilitation Hospital, 1005 East 32nd St., Austin, TX 78705 Tel: 476 - 7111

Civil War Trivia

Questions:

1. When did Longstreet leave Lee and begin the journey west to reinforce Bragg? How long did it take to arrive in the west?
2. What was the first campaign that Longstreet participated in after joining Bragg?
3. Who made the decision in November 1863 to send Longstreet to Knoxville and was there a "political" reason?
4. Why did Longstreet delay his attack on Fort Sanders in Knoxville for over a week?
5. What event precipitated Longstreet's accusation that Jeff Davis was approving failure and disparaging success?

Answers:

1. September 1863; 9 to 10 days
2. Chickamauga
3. Confederate President Jefferson Davis made the decision; in part, it was a result of the animosity between Bragg and Longstreet
4. He was waiting for reinforcements from Chattanooga and for Bragg's chief engineer to arrive to check his plans.
5. Davis' appointment of Bragg to be in charge of "the conduct of military operations in the army of the Confederacy," making Bragg, in effect, chief of staff

Civil War Music

The Southern Soldier Boy

1863

Bob Roebuck is my sweetheart's name,
He's off to the wars and gone,
He's fighting for his Nanny dear,
His sword is buckled on,
He's fighting for his own true love.
His foes he does defy,
He is the darling of my heart,
My Southern soldier boy.

Yo ho! Yo ho! Yo ho ho ho ho ho ho
He is my only joy
He is the darling of my heart,
My Southern Soldier Boy

When Bob comes home from war's alarms,
We'll start anew in life,
I'll give myself right up to him,
A dutiful, loving wife.
I'll try my best to please my dear,
For he is my only joy,
He is the darling of my heart,
My Southern soldier boy.

Oh, if in battle he was slain,
I am sure that I should die,
But I am sure he'll come again
And cheer my weeping eye.
But should he fall in this our glorious cause,
He still would be my joy,
For many a sweetheart mourns the loss
Of a Southern soldier boy.

I hope for the best, and so do all
Whose hopes are in the field,
I know that we shall win the day,
For Southrons never yield.
And when we think of those that are away,
We'll look above for joy,
And I'm mighty glad that my Bobby is
A Southern soldier boy.

Preservation News



Atlanta, GA:

A website developed by William J. Drummond of the Georgia Institute of Technology explains the use of geographic information systems (GIS) technology for Civil War battlefield preservation. According to the site, GISs are “computer systems designed to input, store, display, and analyze spatial information and associated attribute information.” Drummond provides four applications of GIS technology to preservation:

1. to inventory and track a variety of battlefield features; when combined with global positioning systems technology, GIS helps to locate and track historic, interpretive, natural resource, and other types of features;
2. as a management tool for maintaining the infrastructure and natural systems of the land;
3. as a method for battlefield interpretation via storage of large amounts of information;
4. assistance in historical research through integration of historic battlefield maps with modern GIS databases to determine the locations of entrenchments, historic structures, and other features; and
5. as a planning tool for developing battlefield preservation priorities and protection plans.

The site offers a variety of links to related items, including the Civil War Sites Advisory Commission report, “Why Save Civil War Sites?”, maps of Atlanta in 1864 and the Battle of Ringold Gap, three-dimensional views of various Civil War sites, and related sites of interest. The website address is <http://civilwar.gatech.edu/>

*Geographic Information Systems for
Civil War Battlefield Preservation*



Washington, DC:

On Saturday, April 10, 2010, individuals of all ages will work together to clean and restore Civil War-related battlefields, cemeteries, and shrines. The nationwide “Park Day” is underwritten by a grant from History™, formerly The History Channel. According to the Civil War Preservation Trust (CWPT), which started the annual hands-on preservation event, approximately 100 historic sites in 23 states are expected to participate.

CWPT president James Lighthizer stated that “Civil War sites are often the victims of their own popularity. . . . Without proper maintenance, battlefields can suffer from the ravages of both time and tourism. Our goal is to spruce up these links to America’s past so they can be enjoyed by all.”

Park Day is now in its 14th year. At the start of the day, volunteers gather at designated sites to help with routine repairs and maintenance, ranging from raking leaves and hauling trash to painting signs and building trails. Not only do participants get an appreciation for the magnitude of work it takes to maintain such sites, but they also will be able to listen to local historians describe the significance of the place and will be given t-shirts.

Among the Civil War battlefield sites that will host Park Day activities this year are Mansfield Battlefield in Louisiana, Antietam Battlefield in Maryland, Wilson’s Creek Battlefield in Missouri, and the Wilderness Battlefield in Virginia. For a list of the participating Park Day sites, visit <http://www.civilwar.org/parkday/>.

*Civil War Preservation Trust,
March 2010*

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION / PLEDGE SHEET



A u s t i n C i v i l W a r R o u n d T a b l e

NAME:

STREET ADDRESS:

CITY:

ZIP:

WORK PHONE:

HOME PHONE:

E-mail Address:

Pledge / Contribution Amount

Contribution Enclosed: \$ _____

Pledge Amount: \$ _____

Date I will pay by: ____/____/____

Speaker I Wish to Sponsor:

- \$250 in-state speaker
- \$500 out-of-state speaker
- \$100 co-sponsor
- Other Contribution: \$ _____

Particular Speaker I Wish to Sponsor: _____

Membership Status

REGULAR: Dues \$60 for 1 year

SPOUSE: Dues \$10 for 1 year

STUDENT: Dues \$25 for 1 year
(full-time high school/college students only)

Return application/pledge to:

**Mike Watkins, 10214 Oak Hollow Drive
Austin, TX 78758; phone: 512/970-5548**

Fees/Contributions are eligible for tax deductibility as a charitable contribution.

ATTENTION!

We will be selling tickets at the April meeting for our annual spring raffle, to be held in May.

Grand Prize will be a Troiani print.

ACWRT WEB SITE ADDRESS!

www.austincivilwar.org

Check out the Austin Civil War Round Table's wonderful and informative website.

Thanks to our webmistress,

Mary Clare!

The Austin Civil War Round Table

Meeting Schedule

2009					
★ JULY ★ NO Meeting break	★ AUGUST ★ NO MEETING break	★ SEPTEMBER ★ Thursday, 17th 6:30 p.m. Moss Bluff Rebel: A Texas Pioneer in the Civil War by Phillip Caudill Author	★ OCTOBER ★ Thursday, 22nd 6:30 p.m. Stealing the General by Russell Bonds Attorney & Author	★ NOVEMBER ★ Thursday, 19th 6:30 p.m. Lafayette of the South: Prince Camille de Polignac & the American Civil War by Jeff Kinard Author	★ DECEMBER ★ Thursday, 10th 6:30 p.m. Lincoln's Labels: America's Best-Known Brands & Civil War by James Schmidt Author
2010					
★ JANUARY ★ Thursday, 21st 6:30 p.m. Laura Keene & the Lincoln Assassination by Gloria Swift NPS Curator Ford's Theater	★ FEBRUARY ★ Thursday, 18th 6:30 p.m. Civil War Medicine vs. WWII Medicine by Ed Bearss Historian Emeritus Natl. Park Service	★ MARCH ★ Thursday, 18th 6:30 p.m. Robert E. Lee: Reading the Man by Elizabeth Brown Pryor Author	★ APRIL ★ Thursday, 15th 6:30 p.m. Longstreet & the First Corps in the West by Alexander Mendoza Author	★ MAY ★ Thursday, 20th 6:30 p.m. Fire in the Cane Field by Don Frazier Author Historian	★ JUNE ★ Thursday, 17th 6:30 p.m. Laney Prize: TBD by TBD

★ ACWRT Web Site: www.austincivilwar.org ★



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Austin, TX 78758

