

## MEETING NOTICE – MAY, 2015

Join us this month to hear a subject presented by a private writer and researcher. The assassination of Abraham Lincoln has fascinated since 1865. Nora Titone received good reviews for her book. So, please remember our meeting next week.

**DATE:** Wednesday, May 20, 2015  
**PLACE:** Smilie's Restaurant  
5725 Jefferson Highway, Harahan, LA  
**SPEAKER:** Nora Titone  
**SUBJECT:** My Thoughts Be Bloody: the Bitter Rivalry That Led to the Assassination of Abraham Lincoln  
**TIME:** 6:30 p.m. Social  
7:00 p.m. Dinner (\$25.00) (Optional)

**SPEAKER:** Nora Titone studied American History and Literature as an undergraduate at Harvard University, and earned an M.A. in History at the University of California, Berkeley. She has worked as a historical researcher for a range of academics, writers and artists involved in projects about nineteenth-century America. She lives in Chicago and the topic of her presentation is her first book published in 2010.

**SUBJECT:**

In her debut, historical researcher Titone adopts the emerging biographical technique of examining a family instead of an individual. Although it's difficult to keep the spotlight away from murderous John Wilkes—unsurprisingly, he dominates the final chapters—the author does a remarkably thorough job of illuminating the lives of his parents, siblings, most notably older brother Edwin, a 19th-century stage mega-star who once played Hamlet on 100 consecutive nights and dined with President Lincoln, a fan. Titone begins with a tribute to Edwin on New Year's Eve, 1892, a gala function attended by President Grover Cleveland. The author then moves back to England in the 1820s, where Junius Brutus Booth (Edwin and John's father), a notable London actor, was fleeing to America, abandoning his wife and child, in company with pregnant Mary Ann Holmes. After providing the relevant back stories, the author relates the astonishing American success of Junius Brutus, and notes the fierce secrecy about his marital life (it later crumbled). Three of the sons became actors, but Edwin had the greatest talent and eventually became wealthy and influential. John Wilkes, writes Titone, had great

ambition and a matinee idol's looks, but little thespian ability. Though his surname gained him gigs, he rarely impressed either critics or audiences. The three brothers once did a benefit performance of *Julius Caesar* together, and had plans for *Romeo and Juliet* at the time John Wilkes was off interrupting *Our American Cousin* in Washington, D.C. After the assassination, Edwin never again uttered his brother's name publicly. (from Kirkus)

**LAST MEETING:** Martin K. A. Morgan was our speaker last month. Martin spoke to twenty-four members and their guests. First, let us all thank long time member Carl Aspelund for recommending Martin. All of those in attendance present were treated to a thorough discussion of the fall of Fort Morgan, complete with an enjoyable power point presentation. Several images were new to many members and perhaps were drawn from archival sources.

Secondly, our speaker rolled through his lecture enthusiastically and with an upbeat style.

Martin included the fate of the men who comprised the garrison at Fort Morgan in the last part of his lecture. Unlike the Confederate garrison at Fort Gaines who had surrendered and were paroled, the Confederate garrison were sent to Elmira, New York. Several later died under harsh conditions at the Union prison nicknamed "Hellmira".

**POSTSCRIPT:** Did you watch NOVA on WYES – 12 on May 6<sup>th</sup>? This episode was widely touted for several days. The program dealt with the fate of U – 166, a German submarine sunk in the Gulf of Mexico during Operation Drumbeat. U – 166 was found several years ago by an oil company doing systematic mapping for future oil exploration and Martin Morgan was one of the experts who appeared on the program assisting Dr. Robert Ballard (of Titanic fame).

**NEW LISTING:** Need a historic property or a retirement home? Sotheby's has recently listed "The Briars", the antebellum home in Natchez, Mississippi where Jefferson Davis and his second wife, Varina Delles Howell were married. The property has seven bedrooms and nine full baths. The listing price is \$1,995,000.00. See [www.sothebyrealty.com](http://www.sothebyrealty.com).

**CHALMETTE BATTLEFIELD:** This writer has been very gratified over the last several years to be asked to handle all of part of the New Orleans segment of a tour by various historical groups. This past Saturday, instead of writing your newsletter, I was leading a tour for CAMP, i.e., the Council on America's Military Past. This group started in the 1960's and presently has about 400 members who live in all 50 states. CAMP came to New Orleans for the first time since 1980.

I asked the costumed interpreter at Chalmette Battlefield, after he gave a very fine overview of the British campaign to seize New Orleans, why the National Park Service has never placed a plaque or other marker to show where Confederate defenders had placed a battery of artillery which fired upon, and was fired upon, by Farragut after he went past Forts Jackson and St. Philip in 1862.

For example, the Pea Ridge National Battlefield Park in northwest Arkansas, in addition to interpreting the Battle of Pea Ridge, interprets the infamous Trail of Tears, part of which runs very near Elkhorn Tavern.

The park ranger had no answer to my question, which over the years I have asked of two men who worked there, Will Greene and Dale Philips, as well as various park rangers. The ranger on Saturday speculated that the Confederate battery was near the river, very close or on the land occupied by Chalmette National Cemetery.

**JIM MUNDIE:** Jim joined our Round Table many years ago and later developed an interest in researching the burial locations of famous Civil War figures. His first publication was published by this Round Table and was entitled Confederate Generals Buried in Louisiana. His second publication was Texas Burial Sites of Civil War Notables – a Biographical and Pictorial Field Guide (Hill College Press, 2002). He was listed as a co-author, but Jim was the point man who conceived the idea and spent countless hours traveling to dozens of cemeteries with his wife, Sara. Now, a few months ago Jim saw the culmination of years of work to produce a two-volume book set on approximately 1,000 additional Civil War notables buried in cemeteries in Texas. Congratulations, Jim!

**FALL BACK/SPRING FORWARD?** As we have discussed at some length, our Round Table, in existence since 1955, has seen a precipitous drop in veteran members rejoining. Some veteran members who have paid their dues only attend very sporadically. Our group is not attracting new members in more than a token way. Many other groups in existence for various purposes are obviously experiencing some of the same issues. However, as I stated many times, unless we attract more members soon, our Round Table will not be able to support our current format.

**NEXT MEETING:** The first speaker of our 2015 – 16 season will be Robert E. L. “Bobbie” Krick on Wednesday, September 16<sup>th</sup>. Other confirmed speakers for next season are Larry Hewitt, Sam Hood, Ed Bearss and Wiley Sword.

**THANKS:** Richard Seba, our veteran Treasurer, deserves our collective thanks for his great work in overseeing our finances.

This newsletter is published nine times a year by the Civil War Round Table of New Orleans, Inc. Please address all correspondence and changes of address to Charles J. Nunez, Editor, 3537 Tolmas Drive, Metairie, LA 70002, or by e-mail at charlesjnunez@gmail.com.