

The Civil War Round Table of Chicago History

Ralph G. Newman (1911-1998) was a master raconteur, minor league baseball player, Lincoln scholar, expert manuscript appraiser, prominent civic leader and hopeless bibliophile. He founded the renown Abraham Lincoln Book Shop here in Chicago. Part of his motivation for establishing the shop was to serve the passionate collecting needs of a small circle of friends devoted to the study of the Civil War and the Great Emancipator.

Among that cadre were such writers and historians as Carl Sandburg, Bruce Catton, Otto Eisenschiml, E. B. 'Pete' Long, Stanley F. Horn, Lloyd Lewis and T. Harry Williams.

On December 3, 1940, when the 29-year-old Newman and fifteen friends went to dinner at the erstwhile Bismarck Hotel before listening to Percival G. Hart's presentation of "Stonewall Jackson's Valley Campaign," it led to their becoming the charter members of the very first Civil War Round Table.

That modest gathering proved to be momentous: It spawned hundreds of such Round Table discussion groups that meet across the U.S. and around the world.

Our organization's heritage is recounted in *The Civil War Round Table: Fifty Years of Scholarship and Fellowship* (Morningside, 1995) by Barbara Hughett.