

BRUNSWICK CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

MEETING: May 7, 2013

CAUSATION OF THE CIVIL WAR PRAGMATICALLY SPEAKING

SPEAKER: Dr. Max Williams

Max concludes that the War was first and foremost a slavery issue brought about by our original settlement of America. We settled near water first. Jamestown and much of New England was part of the coastal plain running all the way to Georgia. It is 35 miles wide in Maine and widens to 150 miles by the time it reaches Georgia. New Englanders were of a very hard scrabble nature and carved out a living from the sea or boatbuilding. The middle of the country was just that—middle of the road. They did some of everything to make a living. The South planted labor intensive crops coveted by the rest of the world—tobacco and cotton. 1607 Jamestown said send me more people and by 1619 the Dutch and others responded by sending boatloads of women and Black indentured servants with them. They were treated by the colonists as such. By 1650 the profit motive had become so powerful that Blacks were now treated as slaves. They were loaded onto boats headed for the Indies and worked almost to death then sent to America to propagate and support the developing plantation system. The Dutch, English and Americans were the biggest importers. Slavery thrived until the 19th century even though it was inherently wrong. The Civil War developed the death blow to slavery almost tearing our Nation apart in the process.

Max is a true professional. His decision to be our speaker was immediate and as smooth as “gooper feathers!” (gooper feathers are the fuzz on a ripe Georgia peach) He not only covered the whole War and Western development of America, he even added an “afterglow.” His sit down version of Sherman’s march through Georgia to the sea was as real and juicy as those Georgia peaches he requisitioned. He slashed and burned his way by choice and left scars that remain to this day.

Georgia and all of the South were making tons of money from “king” cotton. The Northeast seemed uninterested in this and the Hartford Convention was not able to

bring a quick end to slavery. Now the Louisiana Purchase added the West (to the Rockies) and the balance of slave states was threatened.

We had, Max reminds us, another opportunity when the Declaration of Independence was written. It does not say that women or blacks are included in that part saying “all men are created equal.” Another opportunity was the Constitution with no less than six spots to correct the issue. Instead, a few more lashes were added. A black vote is Three Fifths that of a white. A punitive runaway law was enacted. A plan to stop all importation of slaves would eventually go into effect by 1807 and promote a natural death to slavery. Jefferson said it was like “hearing a fire alarm in the middle of the night.” Now the nation begins to divide. The Northeast became radical abolitionists and the South became defensive of slavery. They became known as “radical fire-eaters.” The Protestants played the Bible Card by pulling out the Old Testament and references supporting slavery. Max wants us to remember that these voices being heard WERE DEFINITELY THE MINORITY! Washington politicians under John Calhoun and Andrew Jackson try to “force”, by compromise, all sorts of solutions but they ultimately ended in secession. Ya just had to be there to hear Max share that famous toast to the Union between Calhoun and Jackson. This was just the beginning of compromise attempts –Clay is part of most.

Max points out that some really stupid stuff happens. The Henry Clay 1850 compromise lets California enter as a free state while giving the South nothing. The Fugitive Slave Law, of the same year, gave a Federal judge \$10 if the slave is returned to a master and \$5 if not returned. The slave gets absolutely no representation. Kansas Territory was to be slave and Nebraska a free soil state. Fraud occurred with the citizens being able to vote multiple times. Slavery tried to move West and a BIG quarrel is the result. The Whig party dies and Republicans take over in the North. A very, very dark horse candidate for their new party is nominated –Abraham Lincoln is finally chosen on the third ballot. Cameron is the political “hack” doing the skullduggery. His reward for this should be the Vice President. Lincoln comments of Cameron’s honesty by the following analogy: “He probably would not steal a red hot stove.” Lincoln is not on the ballot in the South and gets only 42% of the popular vote. He is elected by the Electoral College. In November 1860 he becomes President. December 1860 South Carolina becomes the first of six states to illegally secede from the Union. April of

1861 the South fires the shot heard around the world and Sumter falls. Max points to the crucial issue—SLAVERY. Mark Twain writes a “tongue in cheek” short story about that shot. The theme is like some Southern and Northern neighbors getting together on a camping trip to discuss the ramifications of that shot and after good food and conversation –went home.

Max comments on the burning of Georgia. It was basically breaking the will of the South to fight. Sherman was not the most right, just the most aligned with the issue at hand. Max, you are our gem. Our standing ovation shows where our heart is located. You deserve a boatload of ripe juicy Georgia Peaches!

Submitted by Dan Fink