



# THE drum roll

Volume 30 289th Regular Meeting  
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*The devil was in the details*

Friday, April 6, 2012, 7:30 p.m.

Arlington Heights Memorial Library  
500 North Dunton Avenue, Arlington Heights, Illinois

## Reconstruction Part 2

**A**lthough Reconstruction is not frequently discussed by Civil War Round Tables, the results still affect our daily lives and will continue to do so. On Friday, April 6, Rick Andresen will discuss the period of 1868–1877.

In many ways, the Reconstruction period was successful, but in many other ways it was a failure. In particular, the Reconstruction amendments to the Constitution abolished slavery, granted citizenship to all people born or naturalized in the United States, granted federal civil rights to all citizens, and decreed that the right to vote could not be denied because of race, color, or previous condition of servitude. Certainly those amendments could be considered successful.

It certainly appeared that these amendments provided full citizenship to freedmen with all the rights and privileges that go along with that citizenship. However, the devil was in the details. The right was not unconditional because each state could still determine voter registration and electoral laws. Although the states could not withhold the right to vote because of race, color, or previous servitude, many southern states established conditions for voting, such as literacy tests that were strongly biased against the freedmen. After Reconstruction, white Democrats used force to regain power in the state legislatures and pass laws that effectively disfranchised most blacks

and many poor whites. These laws remained in effect until the Civil Rights movement during the 1960s.

Why weren't the lofty goals of Reconstruction fully achieved? As with most things in life, historians have differed. Some feel that the failure to give land to the freedmen deprived them of an economic power base. Others point to the failure to incorporate southern Unionists in the Republican coalition. Fingers have been pointed at northern Republicans who could have been more effective in guaranteeing political rights to the freedmen. The federal government should have done more to curb the violence of southern whites toward blacks. Another group feels that initially taking power away from southern whites violated democratic principles and caused strong and sometimes violent reactions when these people regained power. We all can look forward to an enlightening presentation on this very controversial topic.

Andresen has studied the Civil War for approximately 25 years, and his major interest is politics of the Civil War. He enjoys studying human nature. He has given speeches on Lincoln's Cabinet, Copperheads, the Committee on the Conduct of the War, Civil War Firsts, and Reconstruction, Part 1 (1861-1868). The first Civil War Round Table he joined was Northern Illinois. Since its inception he also has been a member of the McHenry County Civil War Round Table and has served as president for five years.

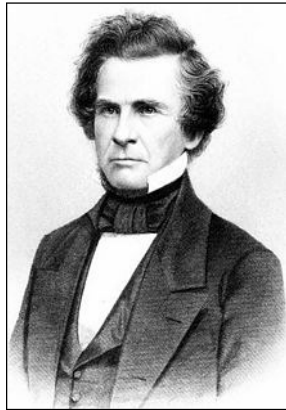
All who would like to join us for dinner with Rick Andresen at 5:30 p.m. before the meeting on April 6 at Sam's of Arlington restaurant, 1863 West Central Road, Arlington Heights, should notify me at [jallen5393@aol.com](mailto:jallen5393@aol.com) or (847) 516-6429 by Wednesday, April 4. — *Jerry Allen*

**Craig Symonds will speak at the annual banquet on June 1**

# Mitchel, Andrews, the General, and Early Opportunities Squandered

By Tom DeFranco

**M**any of us who study the Civil War watched TV and the movies as children. I remember Channel 5 presenting *The Great Locomotive Chase* starring Fess Parker and Jeff Hunter on the Wonderful World of Disney. Recently I watched, for the first time, the Buster Keaton silent version of the adventure on TCM. It was one of the greatest adventure stories in the annals of American military history. The larger picture of the event is also dramatic. To give the Northern Illinois Civil War Round Table the story of the theft of the General, plus



*General Ormsby M. Mitchel*



*James J. Andrews*



*William A. Fuller*

the larger picture, chief historian at the Chickamauga/Chattanooga National Military Park, Jim Ogden, visited us on March 2, 2012.

Ogden started with a character sketch of General Ormsby Mitchel. Mitchel seemed to be a renaissance man. He graduated from West Point as a member of the class of 1829, the class of Robert E. Lee and Joseph E. Johnston. He graduated either 15th of 56 or 5th of 46, depending upon the source. He stayed at West Point for a while to teach mathematics, but later became a chief engineer with the Little Miami (OH) Railroad, studied and practiced law, and became a renowned astronomer in Cincinnati. When war broke out, he sided with the Union and found himself in charge of a division in Don Carlos Buell's Army of the Ohio.

The other key person in this story is James J. Andrews, a civilian who posed as a black market merchant selling necessities such as quinine and

worked as a spy for Don Carlos Buell. When Buell became engaged at Shiloh to support Grant, Mitchel moved to Shelbyville from Nashville to protect the latter city from an advanced position. In Shelbyville, on April 7, 1862, while the fighting on the second day at Shiloh was still raging, Andrews met with Mitchel and convinced him that he and a small band of men could cut Confed-

erate rail and telegraph connections and destroy bridges by stealing a train. The same day, Mitchel accepted the idea and ordered Andrews to begin the operation.

About twenty men from three Ohio regiments of Joshua Sill's brigade volunteered for the job. Mitchel and his division were to rendezvous with Andrews and his raiders in Huntsville, Alabama, on April 11, after the raiders seized the train and did their damage. The move to Huntsville was to be simultaneous and bloodless. From there, Mitchel's division was to capture Chattanooga, which according to intelligence reports had only a 3000-man garrison, the closest reinforcements being at Atlanta. There were several glitches in the execution of seemingly minor, but very important, elements of Andrews's plan.

First, Andrews did not gather the necessary equipment to destroy track or cut telegraph wire. Second, no one accounted for the fact that the train they grabbed would have to stop at various stations along the way because it was on a regular schedule. They would be forced to stop and wait for southbound traffic before they could proceed.

They underestimated the time needed to stop and rip up track and cut telegraph lines. And no consideration was given to the need to switch tracks when they reached Chattanooga.

When the raiders began their adventure, they met Andrews for the first time just east of Shelbyville. They then dispersed into the night and agreed to meet at Marietta, Georgia, to hop on the targeted train. The first calamity that greeted them came courtesy of Mother Nature. It started raining and would not stop for about ten days. As planned, Mitchel and his men captured Huntsville in a bloodless seizure on April 11.

Unfortunately, the raiders didn't begin their part of the mission until the next morning. Captain William Fuller, conductor of the General, a mixed passenger and freight train, began his morning trip out of Atlanta at 4 a.m. and by 5:15 reached Marietta, where Andrews and 19 of his men (two didn't make the train, having been pressed into Confederate service). A short while later, the train stopped at Big Shanty, Georgia, for breakfast. It was then that Andrews and his men seized the General and three boxcars. When Fuller discovered that the General had been stolen, his blood began to boil. He grabbed a push car and pursued the raiders.

At Kingston, the raiders had to await the passage of southbound freight traffic before resuming the trip to Chattanooga. A little north of Kingston the raiders managed to break up some track, forcing Fuller and his party to continue the chase on foot for a stretch. Near Adairsville, Fuller and his party commandeered the south-bound freight train, the Texas, and the pursuit began in earnest. The Texas ran in reverse at speeds up to 60 miles per hour. Eventually, the chase ended just north of the Ringgold, Georgia, station, not far from the area of the battle to be fought near Chickamauga Creek in about a year and a half.

As for Mitchel's capture of Huntsville: It provided the Federal forces with the same benefit that the seizure of Corinth did some seven weeks later. It denied the Confederates a main east/west railroad line and gave the Union an opportunity to seize the important rail and river hub of Chattanooga. Unfortunately, there was no support to capture that city and it would remain in Confederate hands until September 9, 1863, a possible opportunity squandered.

On behalf of the Round Table, I wish to thank Jim Ogden for his fine presentation of the story of one of the Civil War's greatest adventures — big picture and small.

## April Events

**April 4, Lake County Civil War Round Table.** Charlie Banks will speak on U.S. Military Railroads.

**April 10, McHenry County Civil War Round Table.** Marta Vincent will speak on Clothing Worn by Women during the Civil War.

**April 13, Chicago Civil War Round Table.** Marshall Krolick will speak on Riding for the Union: 8th Illinois Cavalry Troopers.

**April 20, Salt Creek Civil War Round Table.** Richard Crowe will speak on Lincoln Assassination Theory.

**April 21, Gail Borden Library, Elgin.** Leviathan 63 steam locomotive, a replica of the locomotive that pulled President Lincoln's funeral train, will be on display from 9 a.m. till 5 p.m. in partnership with the Historic Railroad Preservation Group and Elgin History Museum. Various activities will be

available throughout the day. Information can be obtained at (847) 742-2411 or [gailborden.info](http://gailborden.info).

**April 14, Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, Springfield.** Lincoln's Death Day Ceremony to be held at Oak Ridge Cemetery will feature a military parade, posting of the colors, addresses by dignitaries, presentation of wreaths, and taps. NICWRT member Dave Corbett will present Lincoln-themed entertainment at the luncheon following the service in the Abraham Lincoln Hotel. More information is available at (217) 782-2717.

**April 22, First United Methodist Church, Galena.** The church the Grants attended while they lived in Galena will celebrate President Grant's birthday. He and Mrs. Grant will be in their pew, and the national chaplain of the Sons of Union Veterans will conduct the service at 10:30 a.m. President Lincoln also is expected to attend.



## 2011–2012 Officers and Trustees

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<b>Appointed Positions</b>	
Public Relations	David Sullivan
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Book Raffle	Charles Banks
Newsletter Editor	Sally Smith

## March Raffle

The March raffle winners were Dave Fasth, who won *Lincoln: A Novel* by Gore Vidal, and Pat McCormick, who won *The Last Citadel: Petersburg, Virginia, June 1864–April 1865* by Noah Andre Trudeau, both donated by Paul Wydra; Mary Banks, who won a selection of three paperback books; and Jerry Allen, who won *They Met at Gettysburg* by Edward J. Stackpole, donated by Charles and Virginia Brenneman.

Congratulations to the winners and sincere thanks to the donors. If you would like to donate Civil War–related books or items, please contact Charlie Banks.

## 2012-2013 Slate of Officers

The nominating committee of the Northern Illinois Civil War Round Table is pleased to present the slate of nominees for election to each of the indicated offices for the 2012–2013 year.

President	Tom Gavigan
1st Vice President	Denise Limburg
2nd Vice President	David Powell
Secretary	Bruce Allardice
Treasurer	Tom DeFranco
Corresponding Secretary	Sarah McDougall
Membership	David Sullivan
Historian	Kathleen Lange
Trustee	Fred Reczkowicz
Trustee	Charles Banks

The election for these positions will be held at the regular meeting on May 4, 2012, at the Arlington Heights Memorial Library. Additional nominations for any of the open positions may be made at that meeting with the consent of the nominee, who must be a current member of the Northern Illinois Civil War Round Table.

## April Saturday Discussion

All members and guests are invited to participate in the session to be held in the Zimmerman Room at the Barrington Area Library, 505 North Northwest Highway, Barrington, on April 21, 2012, from 10:00 a.m. until noon. The discussion of the events of 1862 will continue. The discussion will be led by first vice president Tom Gavigan, in the absence of second vice president Denise Limburg.

These discussions are generally held on the third Saturday of the month from September through June. They are held to generate and foster a free exchange of ideas on events that transpired during the Civil War.

## 2011–2012 Speakers

**May 4, 2012.** Thomas Cartwright will speak on Patrick Cleburne's Brigade at Shiloh.

**June 1, 2012.** Craig Symonds will speak on Joseph E. Johnston.

To learn more about this Round Table call Sully Sullivan at (847) 259-5577