



THE drum roll

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305th Regular Meeting
Number 4

December 6, 2013

First war in which railroads were significant factor

Friday, December 6, 2013, 7:30 p.m.

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

Railroads in the Civil War



Charlie Banks

The American Civil War was the first war in which railroads were a significant factor in moving troops and supplying forces in the field. The United States Military Railroad (USMRR) was created. Its purpose was to organize and to coordinate this new capability for the Union Army. The USMRR organization benefited from the appointment of experienced railroad men from the private sector. The USMRR was started in 1862 under men who had vast amounts of rail-roading experience.

Charlie Banks will give a presentation on railroads in the Civil War on December 6, 2013. He runs the book raffle for the round table and is a past president. His favorite subjects are, of course, railroads, and the Maryland Campaign of 1862. He enjoys fishing and walking the fields of the Civil War.

If you would like to join us for dinner with Charlie Banks at 5:30 p.m. at Sam's of Arlington restaurant, 1863 West Central Road, Arlington Heights, before the meeting on December 6, please contact me by December 4 at (847) 577-7744 or dlimburg@prodigy.net. — Denise Limburg

Sites Committee Actions

Chairman John Glazbrook reports that the Sites Committee met on November 16, 2013, and authorized the following donations from the sites fund:

- Camp Douglas, Chicago, \$100.
- Resaca Battlefield, \$200.
- Kenosha Civil War Museum, \$100.
- Friends of Raymond Battlefield, \$100.
- Wildness/Fredericksburg/Spotsylvania/
Chancellorsville National Military Park, \$100.
- Civil War Naval Museum, \$100.

Earlier in the year the committee voted to send \$200 to the Longstreet Society for renovation of the hotel/museum (\$100 from the sites fund and \$100 from the general fund).

Women's Civil War Book Club

The next book for the Civil War book club for women is *Mrs. Lincoln's Dressmaker: A Novel* by Jennifer Chiaverini. The next meeting of the group is scheduled for Saturday, January 25, time and location to be determined. If you are interested in joining the group, please contact Denise Limburg at dlimburg@prodigy.net or (847) 382-1022, or Mary Banks at (847) 497-3149 or zeller1@comcast.net. All members and friends are welcome.

Please send dues payments to Tom DeFranco as soon as possible

Food and the Civil War

By Tom DeFranco

November 1, 2013, saw a presentation by Bruce Kraig, a culinary expert. The Civil War period saw some advances in food production and distribution — especially in the North, with the Industrial Revolution in full bloom.

Kraig began with an admission that he is not a Civil War “expert,” though he proudly claims the title of “buff.” One of his heroes is General Benjamin Butler, obviously not for any demonstrated battlefield prowess, but rather for coming up with the idea of treating escaped slaves as “contraband.” This gave Northern generals a legal excuse to secure those slaves and keep them away from their former masters.

One of the advances of the Nineteenth Century was the canning of food. The process actually came about during the Napoleonic period. Civil War soldiers thus were the beneficiaries of about 50 years of improvements to the process. Given their ability to better distribute supplies to the front than their Southern counterparts, it was primarily the Northern soldiers who benefited. Using rivers and railroads the Northern war machine saw to it that the men were supplied and fed.

But there was more to it than simple distribution advantages. While the South was largely an agrarian society, many of its crops were inedible, including its most well-known crop, cotton. Furthermore, crops like cotton and tobacco were exceptionally rough on the soil. The realization of this situation influenced the South’s desire to continually look for more land farther west and south, toward California and into Central and South America. This is evidenced by the filibuster movement into parts south and the mid-Nineteenth Century manifesto ordering Spain out of Cuba.

The North, on the other hand, still had more than enough farmland to grow edible crops and distribute them to the men at the front. The Northern war machine also had plenty of civilian help from the likes of Clara Barton and especially

Mother Mary Anne Bickerdyke. It was Bickerdyke who went above and beyond to feed the troops and who refused to take no for an answer from politicians and generals who got in her way. General Sherman was quoted once as saying simply, “She ranks me.”

On behalf of the round table, I wish to thank Bruce Kraig for an interesting presentation about food and Civil War armies.

December Events

December 4, Lake County Civil War Round Table. Annual Christmas party and potluck dinner.

December 7, Civil War Museum, Kenosha, WI. Reenactor Steve Sherry will present a workshop on Civil War small arms and uniforms, 1 p.m., \$20/\$15 members. Information on all Civil War Museum programs is available at (262) 653-4140 or www.thecivilwarmuseum.org.

December 8, McHenry County Civil War Round Table. Annual Christmas luncheon.

December 13, Chicago Civil War Round Table. Kevin Weddle will speak on Lincoln’s Tragic Admiral.

December 13, Civil War Museum, Kenosha, WI. Neil Shafer will discuss Civil War paper currency, 12 noon.

December 14, Civil War Museum, Kenosha, WI. An afternoon of songs, crafts, and activities explores how soldiers and civilians celebrated the Christmas holiday during the Civil War.

December 20, Salt Creek Civil War Round Table. Roger Bohn will speak on Richard Yates.

Book Discussion Group

The Civil War book discussion group led by Tom DeFranco at the Eisenhower Library, 4613 North Oketo, Harwood Heights, meets on the first Saturday of the month from 10 until 11:30 a.m. On December 7 they will discuss *Fields of Blood: The Prairie Grove Campaign*, by William L. Shea.

December Saturday Discussion

All members and guests are invited to participate in the session to be held at the Hoffman Estates Community Bank, 1375 Palatine Road, Hoffman Estates, on Saturday, December 21, from 10:00 a.m. until noon. Attendees are asked to park in the adjacent lot rather than in spaces provided for bank customers. The topic of the day will be the annual game of Civil War Trivia. Members are invited to bring their favorite holiday treats to share with the group and their own beverage. The festivities will be led by second vice president Pat McCormick.

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.

Not Another Gettysburg Book!

I just finished Professor Allen Guelzo's recent book, *Gettysburg: The Last Invasion*. Guelzo is most famous as a Lincoln scholar. This book is the first by the professor to capture the blood and guts of the Civil War battlefield.

The first thing that will hit the reader is Guelzo's deep disdain for General George Meade. I realized it during a speech he gave on C-SPAN. Ironically, that's what drew me to read the book. I am a defender of George Meade's performance at Gettysburg, and I wanted to find out if Guelzo's dislike for Meade had any real validity. Since no one is perfect, some criticism is warranted, but Guelzo seems to go over the top. As an example, he somehow concludes from Lee's famous quote about Meade taking advantage of any of Lee's mistakes to his front as meaning that Meade would rather do nothing than do something. This conclusion is twisted logic at best.

In other instances, he declares that John Reynolds, Meade's left wing commander, was in open defiance of Meade by deciding to fight it out at Gettysburg rather than falling back to the Pipe Creek line, whereas Reynolds never received a copy of the Pipe Creek circular. There are other instances when Guelzo faults Meade, not the least of which is for allegedly desiring to leave Gettysburg after the second night but being outvoted by

his corps commanders. This smacks of Tom Carhart's book, *Lost Triumph: Lee's Real Plan at Gettysburg — and Why It Failed*.

All this said, there are some things to like about the book. Guelzo did an admirable job of describing the field, the fighting, and the private soldiers of the battle of Gettysburg. The description of the field alone in the first chapter of the book is phrase turning at its best. — *Tom DeFranco*

Tannehill Iron Works

Judy and I attended the round table's tour of Vicksburg in October, and we extend thanks to Kathleen Lange for her impeccable job in arranging the tour. Parker Hills was a great guide.

On our way home we detoured to Tannehill State Park near Birmingham to tour the park's Iron and Steel Museum. The little-known museum highlights the iron industry as it existed in Alabama during the Civil War. The museum traces the history of the area's iron and steel production beginning in the 1830s and continuing to the present time. A short film and the displays explain the process of iron production during the war better than I have ever seen before.

The centerpiece of the park is the restored remains of three iron furnaces that were in production during the war. The furnaces were reportedly capable of turning out up to 22 tons of pig iron a day. Thirteen iron companies and six rolling mills made Alabama the arsenal of the Confederacy during the last two years of the war. Iron from Tannehill was transported to Selma, where it was cast into cannon and projectiles for the Confederacy. Other products, including skillets, pans, and ovens, were manufactured onsite. Unfortunately for the Confederacy, General James Wilson's Union cavalry destroyed the Tannehill works on March 31, 1865.

The museum has two huge iron salt kettles that were manufactured for evaporating sea water during the war. Also on display are an 1860–1880-era machine shop, an early steam engine, and a collection of Confederate artillery projectiles cast in Selma from iron produced at Tannehill.

Anyone interested in the Civil War would be wise to stop if they are ever in the Birmingham area. — *Dave Noe*



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Book Raffle	Charles Banks
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November Raffle

The November raffle winners were Wayne Rhine, who won *The Union Cavalry in the Civil War* by Stephen Z. Starr; Alfred Kitch, who won *One of Morgan's Men: Memoirs of Lieutenant John M. Porter of the Ninth Kentucky Cavalry*, by John M. Porter; Corey Lange, who won *Pemberton: The General Who Lost Vicksburg*, by Michael B. Ballard; and Pat McCormick, who won *The Civil War Letters of Colonel Hans Christian Heg* by Hans Christian Heg and Theodore Blegen, all donated by Dave Powell.

Congratulations to the winners and sincere thanks to the donors. To donate Civil War-related books or items, please contact Charlie Banks.

To Contribute to the Drum Roll

All members are welcome to contribute items to the newsletter. Appropriate subjects include (but are not limited to) book reviews, family histories, travel reports, and recent research. Articles should be whatever length is necessary to cover the subject; those that are too long will be divided for insertion in more than one issue. If you have information to share, please send it to Sally Smith, 328 Eastern Avenue, Barrington, Illinois 60010-4629; telephone (847) 381-6486; or e-mail drum_roll4@juno.com.



2013–2014 Speakers

January 3	Wayne Rhine	Lincoln the Lawyer
February 7	Doug Stiles	Lincoln's Watch
March 7	Bruce Allardice	The Election of 1864
April 4	David Keller	Camp Douglas
May 2	Betty Kay	Three Illinois Women During the Civil War
June 6	Tim Smith	Corinth

**To learn more about this Round Table call Ellen Allen at (847) 516-6429
or visit our website at www.northernilcwrt.org**