



THE drum roll

Volume 33

317th Regular Meeting

Number 6

February 6, 2015

Were Civil War films accurate, true to life?

Friday, February 6, 2015, 7:30 p.m.

Arlington Heights Historical Museum
110 West Fremont Street, Arlington Heights, Illinois

Civil War Cinema



Bruce Allardice

Growing up in the 1960s and early 70s, I used to love Friday and Saturday nights, when I could stay up to watch the late movie. Almost always, it was a western or a war film — and if the latter, almost always a movie about World War II. I didn't much care for the more traditional fare watched by my generation, such as monster or horror films. I would search the TV listings on a weekly basis to plan my viewing.

Looking back, I am struck by the fact that few of these films were about the Civil War. Oh, there were some, of course. John Wayne's *The Horse Soldiers* was certainly a staple. But compared to the steady diet of British and American films about the Second World War (the 1950s seemed

to generate hundreds of these) American Civil War stories were rare.

Looking back again, I realize that there were more such films than I remember, but many of them didn't interest a 6th or 7th grader all that much. *Gone with the Wind*? Sure, it had soldiers in blue and gray, but to my middle school mind, it lacked a certain something. I wanted battle scenes and war films, not human drama.

Of course, later on came films like *Glory*, and perhaps the most famous Civil War movie of them all, *Gettysburg*, based on the Michael Shaara novel *Killer Angels*. I was a huge fan of Shaara's book, which I read in high school, and I still enjoy viewings of THE MOVIE (which is how pretty much everyone I know refers to it) when I see it on TV.

But were these films accurate, true to life? Did they feel real? Of course those are subjective questions. Everyone's answer will be somewhat different. A film that drops the ball on technical accuracy might still feel real, and vice versa. Everyone will have different standards. I certainly do. I watch movies for escapism and enjoyment, not history, so I don't get upset if the uniforms are wrong, the weapons incorrect, or the beards look weird. (Though I do sometimes wish that make-up could do a better job with the beards.) These things ruin a film for some of my friends, however. I can't fault them for that. We all have our *bête noirs*.

It turns out, however, that there are a fair number of Civil War films. Everyone's favorite internet source, Wikipedia, lists 130 Civil War movies, excluding documentaries such as the Ken Burns epic. A closer look reveals that some of these titles bear only a passing reference to the actual war, however. My favorite "non-war" Civil War

Save June 5 for the annual banquet

film is one I have never seen. It's called *In the Electric Mist* and is based on a James Lee Burke novel, set in present-day Louisiana. Its Civil War connection? The protagonist, a police detective, keeps hallucinating that he sees and talks to General John Bell Hood. I read the book and enjoyed it, so I would greatly like to see the movie.

This month, our speaker is Bruce Allardice, who is going to talk to us about Civil War films. Bruce is of course well known to the Northern Illinois Civil War Round Table, as both a member and previous speaker. I don't know if Bruce has

seen *In the Electric Mist*, but I am hoping he has. Perhaps he can enlighten me as to whether or not it is worth tracking down. Please join us on Friday, February 6, to hear Bruce. The doors open at 7:00 p.m., and the meeting starts at 7:30.

If you would like to join us for dinner with Bruce Allardice at Sam's of Arlington restaurant, 1863 West Central Road, Arlington Heights, at 5:30 p.m. before the meeting on February 6, please contact me at DPowell334@aol.com or (847) 343-2032 by Wednesday, February 4. —
Dave Powell

Minnesota's Civil War Dakota Uprising of 1862

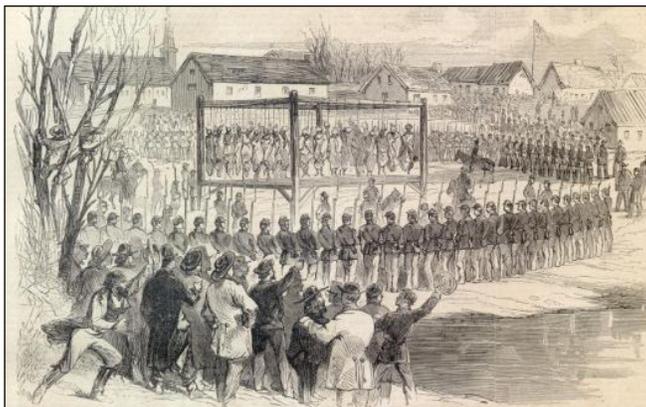
By Tom DeFranco

On Friday, January 9, 2015, the Round Table's own two-time president, Jerry Allen, presented the story of the Dakota uprising in Minnesota. I regret not being in attendance at the meeting that evening, but here is the story in black and white in Jerry's [minimally edited] words.

Although we think of Sioux as one group of Native Americans, this group actually is made up of three tribes: Dakota, Nakota, and Lakota. In 1850, the Dakota homeland was about 38,000 square miles of Minnesota and northern Iowa. In the summer of 1851, United States and Dakota leaders negotiated the Treaty of Traverse des Sioux and the Treaty of Mendota, which resulted in the Dakota being relegated to a 20-mile-wide reservation along 150 miles of the Minnesota River. In exchange the Dakota received goods and annuity payments. When Minnesota became a state in 1858, there were further negotiations that resulted in the Da-

kota losing the part of their reservation north of the Minnesota River.

The hope was that the Dakota would adopt a farming culture, but the results were modest at best. Farming and hunting on the reservation did not support the Dakota, so they had to rely on food and supplies sold to them by traders on credit, resulting in debts that would be paid by the government-provided annuities. The Dakota began to resent their lost land, food shortages, and a famine following a crop failure in 1861. In 1862,



Dakota Execution

the federal government was late in paying the promised annuity because of the Civil War. Because of the late annuity payment, traders stopped extending credit to the Dakota and tensions increased.

On Sunday, August 17, the annuity payment was on its way, but it arrived too late to prevent violence. Four young Dakota were hunting near Acton, Minnesota, when things got out of hand

resulting in the killing of five white settlers. A Dakota war council was convened, and Little Crow agreed to lead attacks and drive out the whites. On the morning of August 18, he led a group that attacked the Lower Sioux Agency where 21 were killed. The violence spread across southwestern Minnesota, and more than 200 were killed that day. The military force at nearby Fort Ridgely was undermanned and unprepared for the crisis it was facing. Company B of the 5th Minnesota came out to find out what was going on, but they were ambushed at Redwood Ferry resulting in 24 soldiers, including Captain John Marsh, being killed in the battle.

Meanwhile, back at Fort Ridgely, Lieutenant Thomas Gere, who had the mumps, commanded 30 men, and refugees were streaming in. Gere sent a message by courier to Governor Alexander Ramsey asking for help. Ramsey appointed Henry Hastings Sibley as colonel of the 6th Minnesota to quell the uprising. On August 28, he arrived at Fort Ridgely with 1400 soldiers, too late to help on August 19.

Little Crow was ready to attack the undermanned fort, but his younger warriors wanted to attack New Ulm, which was an easier target with more plunder. About 100 warriors attacked New Ulm, but without experienced chiefs the attack

failed. Without these younger warriors, Little Crow delayed his attack on Fort Ridgely. This delay allowed time for more soldiers to arrive. There were two failed attacks on Fort Ridgely and another failed attack on New Ulm.

Little Crow's warriors continued to surround the fort until Sibley arrived on August 28. On September 2 about 150 troops were attacked at Birch Coulee resulting in 13 soldiers killed before a column of 240 soldiers arrived from Fort Ridgely, causing the withdrawal of the Dakota. On September 23, Sibley led about 2000 soldiers against about 1200 Dakota at Wood Lake, resulting in a defeat of the Dakota. This would be the last battle in Minnesota.

The Dakota Uprising resulted in the killing of from 450 to 800 civilians, 150 Dakota, and 77 soldiers. There would be 498 trials of Dakota warriors; 303 were condemned to hang. President Lincoln reviewed these proceedings and found that only 38 should be executed. So on December 26, 1862, 38 Dakota were hanged in Mankato, Minnesota, the largest mass execution in our history.

I wish to thank Jerry Allen for the above written form of his presentation, and again I regret missing the presentation. On behalf of the Round Table, I wish to thank Jerry for a terrific re-telling of the Dakota uprising of 1862.

February Events

February 8, Civil War Museum, Kenosha, WI. David Powell will speak on Chickamauga Up Close, 1 p.m., \$15 (\$10, Friends of the Museum). Information on museum programs is available at (262) 653-4140 or www.thecivilwarmuseum.org.

February 11, Civil War Museum, Kenosha, WI. Lincoln Lore Discussion Group will cover Lincoln Material Culture and Artifacts, noon. Topics arise from the museum's collection of *Lincoln Lore Bulletins*, first published by the Louis A. Warren Lincoln Library and Museum in 1928. Links for downloading each session's *Bulletin* can be found at www.thecivilwarmuseum.org.

February 12, Lake County Civil War Round Table. Daniel Johnson will speak on Thomas Chesterfield.

February 13, Civil War Museum, Kenosha, WI. Jerry Kowalski will speak on General Thomas and the Battle of Nashville, noon. Program sponsored by the Milwaukee Civil War Round Table and the Iron Brigade Association.

February 13, Chicago Civil War Round Table. Leslie Goddard will speak on *Gone With the Wind* and the Construction of Civil War Memory.

February 20, Salt Creek Civil War Round Table. Bill Hupp will speak on battlefield preservation.

February 25, Civil War Museum, Kenosha, WI. Lincoln Lore Discussion Group will cover Lincoln the Lawyer, noon. Links for downloading each session's *Lincoln Lore Bulletin* can be found at www.thecivilwarmuseum.org.



2014–15 Officers and Trustees

President	David Powell
1st Vice President	Patrick McCormick
2nd Vice President	Pending
Secretary	Bruce Allardice
Treasurer	Tom DeFranco, Jr.
Corresponding Sec.	Sarah McDougall
Membership	Jerry Allen
Historian	Kathleen Lange
Trustee	Charles Carr
Trustee	Danielle Kafka
Trustee	Charles Brenneman
Trustee	Wayne Rhine
Trustee	Kathleen Lange
Trustee	Alisa Corsi

Appointed Positions

Book Raffle	Charles Banks
Newsletter Editor	Sally Smith

Women's Civil War Book Club

The next book for the Civil War book club for women is *Mrs. Lincoln's Rival* by Jennifer Chiaverini. The group will meet to discuss the book on March 22, 2015, at a time and place to be determined later. If you are interested in joining the group, contact Denise Limburg at (847) 382-1022 or dlimburg@prodigy.net, or Mary Banks at zeller1@comcast.net or (847) 497-3149.

February 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, February 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 siege of Petersburg.

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.

Roster Change

New recruit

Mr. Nathaniel Cerf
492 Gregory Avenue, #3-D
Glendale Heights, Illinois 60714-1850
(847) 698-3228

Book Discussion Group

The Civil War book discussion group led by Tom DeFranco at the Eisenhower Library, 4613 North Oketo Avenue, Harwood Heights, meets on the first Saturday of the month from 10:00 until 11:30 a.m. On February 7, 2015, they will discuss books on Abraham Lincoln.

2014–2015 Speakers

February 6	Bruce Allardice	Civil War Movies
March 6	Rob Girardi	Gouvernor K. Warren
April 3	Dr. Frank Varney	General Grant and the Re-writing of History.
May 1	Eric Wittenberg	John Buford at Gettysburg
June 5	Chris Kolakowski	The Naval War in 1864

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