



THE drum roll

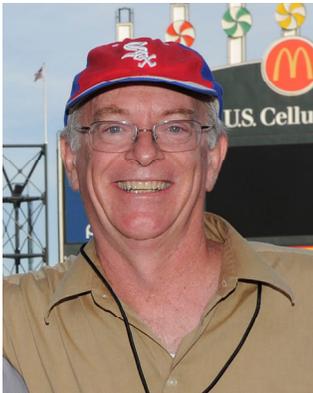
Volume 36 347th Regular Meeting
Number 6 February 2, 2018

Obnoxious to a free people

Friday, February 2, 2018, 7:30 p.m.

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

Conscription and the Civil War



Bruce Allardice

During the Civil War both North and South instituted the draft (conscription) for the first time in U.S. history. This marked the first dramatic (and controversial) intrusion of the U.S. government into people's lives.

Supporters of the draft noted its military necessity: "Where shall we get the men if not by the draft?" observed one Confederate senator. Others saw the draft as "a novelty contrary to the traditional military policy of our nation," a measure "obnoxious to a free people," and a harbinger of European-style government tyranny.

The movie *Gangs of New York* touches on one aspect of the draft: the 1863 Draft Riots in New York City. But the draft resulted in much more than merely a movie subplot, arguably changing

America like no other measure before or since. For many historians, the draft marked part of a new relationship between the national government and the people at large.

On February 2, 2018, Bruce Allardice will examine the draft as it applied to both North and South. For better or worse, American conscription was based on European laws and practices that were denounced as unfair by many Americans. In response to public criticism, the conscription laws were modified by both sides throughout the war. Surprisingly, relatively few soldiers were draftees, but the impact of the draft should not be measured merely in the number of soldiers drafted. In the largest sense, one cannot understand the Civil War without understanding the draft.

A graduate of the University of Illinois, Allardice is a professor of history at South Suburban College and has been president of this round table as well as the Chicago Civil War Round Table.

An avid sports historian, Allardice currently heads the Civil War Baseball subcommittee for the Society of American Baseball Research (SABR) and is a member of SABR's biography committee, specializing in researching the lives of 19th Century ballplayers.

Allardice is the recipient of the CWRT of Chicago's prestigious Nevins-Freeman Award for distinguished service in Civil War Scholarship and the CWRT movement. He is a former board member of the Illinois State Historical Society.

If you would like to join us for dinner with Bruce Allardice at 5:30 p.m. before the meeting on February 2 at Sam's of Arlington restaurant, 1863 West Central Road, Arlington Heights, please contact me at kberlant@comcast.net or (847) 506-1807 by Wednesday, January 31. —

Wayne Rhine

The February meeting will be at the Arlington Heights Historical Museum

The Cushing Brothers in the Civil War

By Pat McCormick

On January 5, 2018, our own president, Wayne Rhine, presented the round table with the story of the four Cushing brothers who served in the Union armed forces.

The Cushings's Puritan forbears arrived in Massachusetts in 1638, and their grandfather served in the War of 1812 (in Winfield Scott's brigade, no less). Their father, Milton Cushing, moved west to Wisconsin, but financial circumstances led the family to divide. Most of the family moved back east to New York while Milton stayed in Wisconsin. He died in 1847 while in the process of returning east to rejoin the clan.

Alonzo H. Cushing was born in 1841. Known as "Lon," he was a middling student who was fond of pranks. But despite his less-than-stellar academic record, a cousin was able to get him appointed to the U.S. Military Academy.

Among his classmates were future generals James Wilson, Wesley Merritt, George Custer, Stephen Ramseur, and Joseph Wheeler (the latter two would serve the Confederacy). Alonzo once again showed a tendency toward mischief and was even arrested for five days for excessive hazing of plebes (freshmen). Nonetheless he graduated with the West Point class of 1861.

Alonzo was assigned to the artillery, achieving the grades of 2nd lieutenant and then 1st lieutenant on the same day. His battery commander was Charles Griffin (who himself would become a general). The battery was in the thick of the fighting at First Manassas, losing two guns. As the beaten Union forces re-organized after that disaster, Alonzo was on the staff of General Edwin Sumner for a time, and then placed in Battery A, 4th U.S. Artillery. After seeing action at 2nd Manassas and Antietam, he was promoted to captain and assigned to the staff of General Darius Couch.

Soon enough, he was back with Battery B, 4th U.S., now the commander of the battery.

Alonzo's six 12-pounder Napoleons were lightly engaged at Chancellorsville, and then found themselves in heavy combat at Gettysburg. The battery was employed on July 2 against General James Longstreet's attack on the Union left

and center, but its key moment came on July 3, when Battery A, 4th U.S., was positioned at the epicenter of Pickett's Charge. During the pre-assault bombardment, two of guns were lost and a third had a wheel damaged. Then, at the height of the infantry attack, the surge reached Cushing's position. Already wounded twice and needing the support of a sergeant to stand — Alonzo ordered canister, then double canister, and ran his remaining two guns right up to the stone wall. Just before General Lewis Armistead's infantry overran the battery, Alonzo was killed by a shot to his face.

Incredibly, it was not until 2014 — 151 years after his death — that Alonzo was awarded the Medal of Honor.

William B. Cushing was born in 1842. He exhibited an independent streak at an early age, running away from home (and jumping into the Chicago River) at age 3. The same cousin who secured Alonzo's appointment to West Point also arranged a spot for William at the U.S. Naval Academy. There he accumulated a long list of demerits and resigned when the commandant recommended his dismissal. However, a relative arranged a meeting with Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles, who assigned William to the *USS Minnesota*. He saw his baptism of fire at Hatteras Inlet in 1861, then after challenging a fellow officer to a duel was forced to resign. Yet again he was reinstated by Welles and had positions on many ships. Serving (for the most part) in the



The four Cushing brothers

blockading forces along the North Carolina coast, William became known for his daredevil exploits, one of which involved an unsuccessful attempt to capture Confederate General Louis Hebert. He also seized a British ship that he mistook for a blockade runner, nearly causing a second "Trent Affair."

William's most notable exploit was his 1864 attack on the Rebel ironclad *Albemarle*, which had sunk two Union warships on the Cape Fear River in North Carolina. William devised a plan whereby he would lead two motorized launches up the river under the cover of night and destroy the behemoth with "torpedoes" (as mines were known at the time) on spars extending from the front of the launches. (Only one launch was available, as it turned out.) As William drew close to the ironclad, his presence was discovered; under fire from pickets, he maneuvered next to the vessel, running it over a log barrier and exploding the torpedo against its hull. *Albemarle* sank in 8 feet of water.

William was one of only two survivors of the successful mission and was able to reach friendly lines. As a Navy man, he was not eligible for the

Medal of Honor, but received the Thanks of Congress (which was even more prestigious at the time). He returned to duty, serving as part of the Navy's land attack on Fort Fisher in 1865. He remained in the Navy after the war, but died at the age of 32 from sciatic tuberculosis (which ran in his family). No less than five U.S. Navy ships have been named for William, the most recent being decommissioned in 2005.

The other two Cushing brothers had less epic careers. Howard B. Cushing initially served with Battery B, 1st Illinois Artillery, serving at Fort Donelson and Shiloh. After Alonzo's death, Abraham Lincoln assigned Howard to command his brother's former battery (did these Cushings have connections, or what?). Howard even wore his brother's bloodstained shoulder straps. He remained in the army after the war, but was killed in an Apache ambush in 1871. The oldest of the brothers, Milton B. Cushing, served as a Navy paymaster throughout the war. He died in 1887 of the family curse, sciatic tuberculosis.

On behalf of the round table, I would like to thank Wayne Rhine for letting us know the illustrious Cushings.

Eisenhower Library Discussion

The Civil War discussion group 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 3 the group will discuss the battles for Chattanooga.

Roster Changes

New members

Mr. Harold Knudsen
1228 Luther Lane
Arlington Heights, Illinois 60004-4679
(703) 597-5957
e-mail james.longstreet@hotmail

Mr. Walter Parus
1403A Orange Court
Mt. Prospect, Illinois 60056-6311
(224) 578-2194
e-mail gsbasso@gmail.com

drum roll, February 2018

February Saturday Discussion

All members and guests are invited to participate in the session to be held at the Barrington Area Library, 505 North Northwest Highway, on Saturday, February 17, from 10:00 a.m. until noon. The topic will be coastal operations in Carolina.

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 Civil War events.

Women's Civil War Book Club

The next book for the Civil War book club for women is *The Smoke at Dawn* by Jeff Shaara. Meeting date, time, and location had not been determined as of press time. If you are interested in joining the group, contact Denise Limburg at dlimburg@prodigy.net or (847) 382-1022 or Mary Banks at zeller1@comcast.net or telephone (847) 497-3149.



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Appointed Positions

| | |
|--------------------------|----------------------|
| Book Raffle | Charles Banks |
| Newsletter Editor | Sally Smith |

January Raffle

The lucky winners at the January book raffle were Marty Berlant, who won *Mr. Lincoln's Army* by Bruce Catton; Fred Reczkowicz, who won *Back Door to Richmond: The Bermuda Hundred Campaign, April–June 1864* by William Glenn Robertson; Danielle Kafka, who won *Brandy Station 1863: First step towards Gettysburg* by Dan Beattie; Bruce Allardice, who won *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism: Ideology and Identity in the Civil War South* by Drew Gilpin Faust; Wayne Rhine, who won *Southerners at Rest: Confederate Dead at Hollywood Cemetery* by Chris L. Ferguson; and Pat McCormick, who won *Mary Todd Lincoln* by Jean H. Baker.

Congratulations to the winners and sincere thanks to the donors.

February Events

February 3, Kenosha Civil War Museum. Steve Acker will lead a class on the Petersburg campaign, 1–3 p.m., \$25/\$20 Friends of the Museum. Information on all Civil War Museum programs is available at www.thecivilwarmuseum.org or (262) 653-4140.

February 7, Kenosha Civil War Museum. Dr. Gordon Dammann will lead a workshop on the history, improvements, and shortcomings of medical care during the Civil War, 6:30–8:30 p.m., \$20 /\$15 FOM.

February 9, Second Friday Lecture Series, Kenosha Civil War Museum. Gene Salecker will speak on Reuben B. Hatch, the Man Who Over-

loaded the Sultana, noon. Free program is sponsored by the Milwaukee Civil War Roundtable and the Iron Brigade Association.

February 9, Chicago Civil War Round Table. Larry Hewitt will speak on Confederate General Richard Anderson.

February 17, Salt Creek Civil War Round Table. The 500th meeting will be a panel discussion.

February 17–18, Civil War Medical Weekend, Kenosha Civil War Museum. Living history programs commemorating the roles of physicians, nurses, and caregivers, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m, Saturday; noon – 4 p.m. Sunday. Pamela Toler will tell the story of nurses who served, 1 p.m., Saturday.

2017–2018 Speakers

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|---------|--|------------------------------|
| March 2 | Kurt Carlson | Chicago During the Civil War |
| April 6 | Daniel Weinberg | Facts About Abraham Lincoln |
| May 4 | Jonathan Sebastian | The 1862 Mid-term Elections |
| June 1 | An Evening with President and Mrs. Lincoln | Max and Donna Daniels |

To learn more about the Northern Illinois Civil War Round Table
visit our website at www.northernilcwrt.org