



THE drum roll

Volume 30 287th Regular Meeting
Number 6 February 3, 2012

What the Good Law Says

Friday, February 3, 2012, 7:30 p.m.

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

Major General G. K. Warren and the Battle of Five Forks

Gouverneur Warren was born in Cold Spring, New York, and entered the United States Military Academy at age 16. He graduated second in the Class of 1850. He entered the Corps of Topographical Engineers where he worked on the Mississippi River, trans-continental railroad surveys, and the trans-Mississippi West. During the Civil War, Warren was an engineer and general in the Army of the Potomac. He is probably best known for arranging the last-minute defense of Little Round Top at the Battle of Gettysburg.

However, his subsequent service as a corps commander was tarnished after the Battle of Five Forks, when he was relieved of command by General Philip Sheridan. As a result of this humiliation, Warren resigned his commission as major general of volunteers in protest and reverted to his permanent rank as major in the Corps of Engineers where he would serve for the next seventeen years. In 1879, he was promoted to lieutenant colonel.

After the war, Warren repeatedly requested a court of inquiry to exonerate him from Sheridan's action. However, Sheridan was a very popular Civil War hero, and Ulysses Grant and William Sherman were good friends of his. As long as

Grant was General of the Army and President of the United States, no court of inquiry could possibly be critical of General Sheridan. So numerous requests were ignored or refused until Rutherford B. Hayes became President.

In December 1879 Hayes ordered a court of inquiry that convened in January 1880 and closed in July 1881. However, given the popularity of General Sheridan and the support of General Sherman, the court was very deliberate in coming to a verdict. So the wheels of justice moved slowly. Before the verdict was announced, Warren died of acute liver failure related to diabetes on August 8, 1882. The Philadelphia *Inquirer* reported that "he had been confined to his bed less than one week; but for a long time, especially since the close of the recent Court of Inquiry relating to his conduct at the battle of Five Forks, he has shown signs of great mental depression, and actually died of a broken heart, although he had diseases which in time might have caused death."

On Friday, February 3, 2012, Paula Walker will speak to us about General Warren and championing his cause. She is a graduate of Moraine Valley Community College with an A.S. degree in business. She went on to receive training as a paralegal at Roosevelt University in Chicago. Paula Walker is very active in the Civil War Round Table of Chicago and the Salt Creek Civil War Round Table. She started working on her Warren biography in 1992.

In connection with this work, she has traveled for research to the New York State Library, the Library of Congress, the National Archives, the Smithsonian Institution, and numerous law libraries. In addition, she has toured many Civil War battlefields. Of course, she found Five Forks and its related battle sites the most interesting. In

Please note change in location for the February Friday night meeting

2006, she asked Robert Girardi to join her on the biography because she understood that she was not the person to treat Generals Grant and Sheridan fairly, and being as fair as possible was always her goal. The Warren biography *What the Good Law Says* is close to being published.

All who would like to join us for dinner with Paula Walker at 5:30 p.m. before the meeting on February 3 at Sam's of Arlington restaurant, 1863 West Central Road, Arlington Heights, should notify me at jallen5393@aol.com or (847) 516-6429 by Wednesday, February 1. —*Jerry Allen*

Visit from a Battlefield Rock Star

By Tom DeFranco

The Northern Illinois Civil War Round Table was truly blessed to have as our speaker one of the most prolific Civil War students of our time. Edwin C. Bearss graced us with his presence on Friday evening, January 6, 2012. Bearss not only is America's premier Civil War expert, but he is endowed with an unbelievable knowledge of general military history as well. He well knows the "sting of battle" (to borrow a phrase from George C. Scott, in *Patton*) from personal experience. He was one of several Marines from his platoon wounded by Japanese fire from a series of machine gun nests situated across Suicide Creek on the western end of the island of New Britain near Cape Gloucester, where the First Marine Division landed on the day after Christmas 1943. The action that saw Bearss and his colleagues hit by machine-gun fire took place a little over a week after the invasion.

What does this have to do with the American Civil War? Some of the methods and systems of medical care that Bearss received for his wounds represented a refinement of those instituted in the earlier war. By the time of the Second World War, sulfa powder and pills helped to stem the tide of infection (until penicillin came into use near the end of the war).

For the Civil War soldier, the medical authorities did not yet have the benefit of Pasteur's or Lister's research on germs and infections. That was why so many more Yanks and Rebs died of disease, instead of minie balls and artillery projectiles. But knowledge alone didn't always help a soldier's lot. Even during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71, more men were still killed by microbes than by ordnance.

Doctors Lawson, Hammond, and Letterman were the Union army's chief surgeons during the Civil War. Dr. Tom Lawson was a very frugal sort who frowned upon even the most useful of expenditures that would make medical practice in the army as efficient, safe, and clean as possible. As early as mid-1861, the newly formed United States Sanitary Commission produced a White Paper making several key suggestions, including ousting Dr. Lawson from his post and replacing him with Dr. William Hammond.

Dr. Hammond had some important qualities that Dr. Lawson lacked, such as drive, determination, and a desire to see the medical care offered in the army improve drastically. He suggested the use of ambulances and medical schools and training for the ambulance drivers and nurses. A run-in with other medical authorities led to his dismissal.

Enter Dr. Jonathan Letterman. He continued the concept of an efficient ambulance service, but his biggest claim to fame was the establishment and implementation of a system of triage and mobile regimental hospitals. He also instituted forward aid stations.

Bearss also explained to the audience that the old adage of a wounded soldier biting the bullet was becoming a thing of the past during the Civil War. Some 95 percent of amputations were done with chloroform or ether administered as anesthesia. Still, anesthetic or not, depending upon the location of the wound, death was not uncommon. For the extremities, fingers and toes saw mortality rates of 3 and 6 percent respectively. When a leg wound required amputation, the further up the leg, the likelier the patient was to die. The soldier hit in the lower leg (below the knee) experienced a

38 percent mortality rate, and a knee joint wound saw a 58 percent likelihood of death. God forbid a hip joint wound; the death rate for that wound was 88 percent.

On January 3, 1944, when Ed Bearss was wounded, Letterman's system of triage was still in use, albeit in a more refined manner, and the wounded moved from one level of care to another much quicker, with more steps along the way. There was also a difference between the distances of the forward aid station and the immediate front. Bearss was shot in both arms, his posterior, and one of his heels.

He reported that he was put into a cast and felt like Lon Chaney in one of the mummy movies after a while. About four months later, in May 1944, Bearss, recuperating in San Diego, was told

that he would not require amputation. This news made it easier for him to enjoy his hobby of researching and studying the Civil War.

And it gave those of us in the Civil War community the benefits of having him guide us through military battlefield parks, reading his articles and books, and listening to him speak at round tables and symposia for more than half a century.

I sincerely thank Ed Bearss, on behalf of the Northern Illinois Civil War Round Table, for a gripping presentation on Civil War medicine and the way it influenced those who helped him with the battlefield wounds he sustained. It isn't often that we are blessed to have not only one of the most famous people in the Civil War community speak to us, but a true war hero, as well.

February Events

February 1, Lake County Civil War Round Table. Gene Wells will speak on the battle of Pea Ridge.

Through February 17, Phillips Library, Aurora University, Aurora, IL. Lincoln: the Constitution and the Civil War, a traveling exhibition by the American Library Association, will be on display. Free. More information is available at www.aurora.edu/artsandideas.

February 4, Civil War Museum, Kenosha, WI. Re-enactor Steve Acker will portray an officer of the 36th Wisconsin Infantry at its winter camp outside Petersburg, VA, from 10 a.m.–1 p.m. At 1 p.m. he will talk on offensive and defensive tactics and basic infantry practices taught to officers during the Civil War. He will then take those specifics to Ulysses S. Grant and Braxton Bragg and apply them to battles of the audience's choosing. Free program sponsored by the Milwaukee Civil War Round Table and the Iron Brigade Association. Information on all museum activities is available at www.thecivilwarmuseum.org or (262) 653-4140.

February 10, Civil War Museum, Kenosha, WI. Dan Nettesheim will examine how elements of Grant's Fort Henry/Donelson Campaign influenced his strategy throughout the rest of the war, 12 noon. Free.

February 10, Chicago Civil War Round Table. Harry Bulkeley will speak on U. S. Grant: "I Propose To Fight It Out."

February 17, Salt Creek Civil War Round Table. Leslie Goddard will appear as Mary Chesnut.

February 12, Civil War Museum, Kenosha, WI. Timothy Connors and George Buss will re-enact and discuss portions of the 1860 Lincoln-Douglas debate, 1 p.m. Free program sponsored by the Milwaukee Civil War Round Table and the Iron Brigade Association.

February 14, McHenry County Civil War Round Table. Kathy Grey will speak on the Grimke Sisters, Part Two.

February 15, Civil War Museum, Kenosha, WI. Curator Doug Dammann will lead a discussion on Army Life in a Black Regiment, focusing on Colonel Thomas Walworth Higginson's experience leading the Union's first regiment of freed slaves, 7 p.m. Cost \$10, \$5 for Friends of the Museums. Advance registration required.

February 18, Civil War Museum, Kenosha, WI. Dr. Gordon Dammann will talk about how Dr. Jonathan Letterman revolutionized the way wounded were removed from the battlefield and how his plans are still instituted today, 1 p.m. Cost \$10, \$5 for Friends of the Museums. Advance registration required.



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January Raffle

The January raffle winners were Michael Terry, who won *Advance and Retreat* by John Bell Hood, Lt. Gen., CSA; Cheryl Cooke, who won *Great Battles of the Civil War* by the editors of *Civil War Times Illustrated*; John McCann, who won *The General's Wife* by Ishbel Ross; Phillip Thornton, who won *The Last Full Measure* by Richard Moe; and Paul Wydra, who won *Unconditional Surrender: The Fall of Fort Donelson and the Fall of Fort Henry* by Edwin C. Bearss.

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.

Roster Changes

New recruit

Mr. Les Keag
904 Quince Lane
Mt. Prospect, Illinois 60056-1502
(847) 298-3165

Correction

Kurt Carlson and Janet Linhart
1465 McCormick Place
Wheaton, Illinois 60189-7136
(630) 752-1330
e-mail kurtcarlson@att.net, janetlinhart@att.net

February 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 February 18, 2012, from 10:00 a.m. until noon. The discussion of the events of 1862 will continue. The discussion will be led by 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

March 2	James Ogden	The Great Locomotive Chase
April 6	Rick Andresen	Reconstruction, Part II
May 4	Thomas Cartwright	To Be Determined
June 1	Craig Symonds	To Be Determined

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