



THE drum roll

Volume 36 346th Regular Meeting
Number 5 January 5, 2018

Four Cushing brothers in the Civil War

Friday, January 5, 2018, 7:30 p.m.

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

Wisconsin's Cushing Brothers



Wayne Rhine

The United States military was fortunate to have the services of four Cushing brothers from Wisconsin. On January 5, 2018, Wayne Rhine will discuss the military careers of the Cushing boys.

Alonzo Cushing, the young first lieutenant, commanded Battery A, 4th United States Artillery, and was breveted a major for his actions at Chancellorsville. At Gettysburg he was wounded twice and was ordered to the rear. However, he remained with his battery until he was mortally wounded at the height of Pickett's charge. Alonzo Cushing was the latest person to receive the Medal of Honor, which was posthumously awarded by President Obama on August 26, 2014.

His brother William Cushing attended the Naval Academy at the same time Alonzo was a cadet at West Point. He was expelled on the eve of the war because of pranks and poor scholarship but was reinstated by Secretary of the Navy Gideon Wells. He was responsible for the planning and execution of the daring plan that successfully sank the ironclad CSS Albemarle. He was known as Lincoln's commando and is considered to be the first Navy Seal. He survived the war and remained in the navy until his death on December 17, 1874.

The third Cushing brother, Howard, first served as a private with the Illinois Light Artillery. Upon the death of Alonzo he was commissioned as a lieutenant with the 4th United States Artillery and survived the war. After the war he served as a first lieutenant with Troop F, 3rd United States Cavalry, and was killed in battle against the Chiricahua Apaches in a battle known as the Custer of Angora.

The fourth brother, Milton, served as a paymaster during the Civil War.

Judge Wayne Rhine was first licensed as an attorney in 1965 and was engaged in the practice of law for 18 years. He also served as prosecutor for the Village of Calumet Park and as a member of the Glenview Zoning Board of Review. He was appointed as a judge of the Circuit Court of Cook County in 1983 and served until he retired in 2007 as a supervising judge. He has had an interest in the Civil War since grade school and is currently president of the round table.

If you would like to join us for dinner at Sam's of Arlington restaurant, 1863 West Central Road, Arlington Heights, at 5:30 p.m. before the meeting on January 5, please contact me at (847) 506-1807 or kberlant@comcast.net by Wednesday, January 3. — *Wayne Rhine*

Please note that the January meeting is at the library

Thomas Meagher of the Irish Brigade

By Pat McCormick

On December 1, 2017, the round table heard the life story of Thomas Francis Meagher — the commander of the Army of the Potomac’s legendary Irish Brigade. Meagher (pronounced “Mar”) was born on August 3, 1823, in Waterford, Ireland. After graduating from Stonyhurst College in England, Meagher went to Dublin to study law, where he became a follower of the “Liberator,” Daniel O’Connell.

O’Connell had won some major rights for Catholics while working within the law. He now targeted the Act of Union itself — the binding of Ireland to England — but after the Crown outlawed large assemblies, O’Connell had to retreat. His younger followers, including Meagher, were displeased and began making more rebellious speeches. They became known as the Young Ireland movement.

The onset of the potato famine in 1845, and even more so the callous British response, brought Young Ireland to new heights; a particularly militant speech brought Meagher the sobriquet “Meagher of the Sword.” Young Ireland eventually began dabbling in actual rebellion, and in 1848, Meagher and three associates were charged with sedition and banished for life to Tasmania. Life there was not horrible — they had some privileges — and Meagher even got married. But he was still a prisoner, still restricted in where he could go on the island, and he was able to escape in early 1852.

Upon arrival in New York, Meagher was an instant celebrity. He went on a speaking tour and then settled in to law and politics. He also ran an Irish newspaper for a few years. His legal career saw its highlight in 1859 when he was part of the defense team in Dan Sickles’s murder trial.

When the Civil War arrived, Meagher joined the 69th New York militia. They received their baptism of fire at First Manassas, then were mustered out and re-enlisted as U.S. Volunteers. Over the fall and winter of 1861 an all-Irish brigade was formed, with Meagher in command, consisting of the 63rd, 69th, and 88th New York Volunteers. They carried green flags with gold harps in addition to their U.S. flags.



Thomas Francis Meagher

The Irish Brigade saw combat in the Peninsula Campaign, first at Seven Pines and then in the Seven Days (by which time the non-Irish 29th Massachusetts was added). These blue-bloods fit in well enough that Meagher referred to them as “Irishmen in disguise.” The brigade distinguished itself particularly at Gaines Mill and Glendale, and lost 700 men (20 percent of its strength) in the Seven Days.

Their next combat was at Antietam in September 1862. Spearheading the charge of General Israel Richardson’s division against the Sunken Road, they doggedly advanced in the face of murderous fire, but were

halted just shy of a breakthrough, with heavy losses. Meagher himself was stunned when his horse was killed under him, and was carried from the field. Although they did not break the line, they did pave the way for the next brigade to do so, and thus contributed to the cracking of the Rebel center — a key moment that was not followed up by army commander General George McClellan.

In December 1862, Fredericksburg saw another determined attack by the Brigade (which had now lost the 29th Massachusetts but gained the Irish 28th Massachusetts and the partially Irish 116th Pennsylvania). This time the target was the infamous Stone Wall on Marye’s Heights. By some

accounts the Irish Brigade got closer to that deadly wall than any other attackers that day, but nobody was going to crack that position. Even the enemy commented on the bravery of the Irishmen, George Pickett writing to his wife that “the brilliant assault on Marye’s Heights of their Irish Brigade was beyond description.”

The following March, the Irish Brigade hosted a raucous, memorable St. Patrick’s Day celebration in the army camp at Falmouth with a steeplechase horse race, a lavish luncheon, and theatrical performances at night. For the enlisted men there were sports and Irish dancing contests.

Soon enough it was back to war, and at the beginning of May the armies clashed at Chancellorsville. The Irish Brigade was only lightly involved, though on May 3 they saved the guns of the 5th Maine battery while covering a Union pullback.



Group of the Irish Brigade at Harrison’s Landing, Virginia, July 1862. (Library of Congress)

By now, the Irish Brigade was a ghost of its former self, and when Meagher was denied permission to pull it out of line and recruit it back to strength, he resigned command. (Two months later at Gettysburg, the brigade would field barely over 500 men.) He spent much of 1864 speaking in support of Lincoln and black rights, and then was given a rear-area command in Tennessee.

In 1865 he was appointed territorial secretary in Montana, but he spent most of his time there as acting governor. On July 1, 1867, Meagher was on a steamboat in the Missouri River when he fell overboard and was

never seen again. The cause of his fall will never be known, but his friends believed he was the victim of vigilantes who opposed him as governor.

I thank the round table for the opportunity to present the short life of Thomas Francis Meagher.

January Saturday Discussion

All members and guests are invited to participate in the session to be held at the Barrington Area Library on Saturday, January 20, 2018, from 10:00 a.m. until noon. The topic of the day will be the Red River Campaign.

These discussions are 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.

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 January 6 the group will discuss the aftermath of Chickamauga and the lead-in to Chattanooga.

drum roll, January 2018

January Events

January 11, Lake County Civil War Round Table. Attendees will choose from several movies or Civil War battle documentaries.

January 12, Chicago Civil War Round Table. Bruce Allardice will speak on the Battle of Ezra Church.

January 20, Salt Creek Civil War Round Table. Rob Girardi will speak on the Rise and Fall of the G.A.R. in Chicago.

Milestone Birthday

Charter member and former round table president Brodie Herndon, of Streamwood, recently celebrated his 90th birthday.



2017–18 Officers and Trustees

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Appointed Positions

Book Raffle	Charles Banks
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December Raffle

The lucky winners at the December book raffle were Ken Tokarz, who won *Hood's Texas Brigade: Lee's Grenadier Guard* by Colonel Harold B. Simpson; Mark Ostrand, who won *The Atlas of the Civil War*, edited by James M. McPherson; Danielle Kafka, who won *Abraham Lincoln: A Biography* by Benjamin P. Thomas; Mark Schmitz, who won *To Die in Chicago: Confederate Prisoners at Camp Douglas 1862–1865* by George Levy; Wayne Rhine, who won *The Civil War Puzzle*, and Pat McCormick, who won *Civil War Terror* a History Channel DVD.

Congratulations to the winners and sincere thanks to the donors.

2017–2018 Speakers

January 5	Wayne Rhine	The Cushing Brothers
February 2	Bruce Allardice	The Draft
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	To be arranged	



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