



# THE drum roll

Volume 30      286th Regular Meeting  
Number 5      January 6, 2012

## *The rock star of battlefield guides*

Friday, January 6, 2012, 7:30 p.m.

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

### History's Pied Piper



Ed Bearss

In 2005, for its 35th anniversary, Smithsonian magazine published a special edition that honored “35 Who Made a Difference: Innovators of Our Time.” Among those honored were such well-known people as Bill Gates and Steven Spielberg. Also among the honorees was Ed Bearss, who was said to have “a battlefield voice, a kind of booming growl, like an ancient wax-cylinder record amplified to full volume, about the way you’d imagine William Tecumseh Sherman sounding the day he burned Atlanta, with a touch of Teddy Roosevelt charging up San Juan Hill.” For those of us who have been on a battlefield with Ed, this is an apt description. He is truly the “rock star of battlefield guides.”

Ed Bearss was born in 1923 on a ranch on Sarpy Creek, Montana, not too far from the Little Bighorn Battlefield. In 1942, Ed joined the Marine Corps, with whom he served in the Pacific Theater of World War II. In January 1944 at Cape

Gloucester, New Britain, his platoon was attacked by Japanese machine-gun fire that killed several Marines and wounded Ed in four places. This incident led to 26 months of hospital stays and rehabilitation and finally, an honorable discharge in 1946. During his time in hospitals, Ed spent many hours studying American history.

This course of study led him to a career in the National Park Service as a historian. His first major position as park historian was at the Vicksburg battlefield in Mississippi. Ed plunged into Civil War history at Vicksburg as well as other area locations. His many successes led to his being named chief historian for the National Park Service. Ed became a national resource of valuable information. He often testified before Congress on matters relating to the National Park Service.

In 1995, Ed retired from the Park Service but continued working as a tour leader with various history touring companies. Although he is best known for his Civil War tours, he has led tours on many aspects of American history. A few years ago, John C. Waugh wrote *Edwin Cole Bearss: History's Pied Piper*. For those who would like more detail on Ed's life and his passion for history, this book is an excellent source.

On Friday, January 6, 2012, Ed will address the Northern Illinois Civil War Round Table on the subject of Civil War battlefield medicine and how it compared to World War II battlefield medicine. In particular, he will discuss his own experience and the medical treatment he received.

All who would like to join us for dinner with Ed Bearss at 5:30 p.m. before the meeting on January 6 at Sam's of Arlington restaurant, 1863 West Central Road, Arlington Heights, should notify me at [jallen5393@aol.com](mailto:jallen5393@aol.com) or (847) 516-6429 by Wednesday, December 4. — *Jerry Allen*

**Please send dues payments to Tom DeFranco as soon as possible**

# Notre Dame and the Civil War

By Tom DeFranco

On Friday night, December 2, 2011, Father Bob Miller of the Civil War Round Table of Chicago presented his program about priests from the University of Notre Dame during the American Civil War.

Given that the majority of Americans at the time were Protestants, it might seem that there was not much call for Catholic chaplains. During the Mexican War, Catholic soldiers were seldom, if ever, allowed to attend Mass. In fact, the virulently anti-immigrant (and more specifically, anti-Catholic) political party, the Know-Nothings, was still active in the 1854 and 1856 elections although its popularity was fading going into the 1860s. The members became divided over the issue of slavery and many of their numbers rolled into the newly formed Republican Party. The Federal army's growth at the start of the war included many Irishmen and men from the southern German states, and there was a call for Catholic chaplains to tend to their flocks.

A major source of the Catholic clergy attending to the religious needs of Catholic troops was the University of Notre Dame in northern Indiana. As the name would indicate, Notre Dame was founded by a French priest, Father Edward Sorin. Although many of the early students were Irish, many of the faculty were French priests. The school gave Catholics immigrating to the growing western states of Ohio, Wisconsin, Indiana, and Illinois access to higher education. Of the little

over 3700 chaplains in the Civil War, only 82 were Catholic. Among the Notre Dame-affiliated chaplains, Father Bob focused on several, including the most famous of the Catholic chaplains, Father William Corby of Gettysburg fame.

In an effort to prevent "sheep stealing" there was a call for Father Sorin to provide Catholic guidance. "Sheep stealing" was defined as chaplains of other faiths making overtures to Catholic troops to convert to Protestantism. Most famous for this practice was Major General O. O. Howard, a devout Protestant with ties to the Methodist and Episcopal churches.

Among the first Catholic chaplains assigned to the Army of the Potomac was Father Paul Gillen. Father Gillen served from the early summer of 1861 through the middle of July 1865. Although already in his fifties by the time the war started, he saw to his flock in the eastern army without any major health issues. Initially he re-

fused an officer's commission; he chose to ride around in a makeshift carriage that served as his home and church until General Ulysses S. Grant disallowed it after taking over in the East. He then served the 170th New York regiment. Early on, Father Gillen received help from Father Sorin in the person of Father James Dillon. Father Dillon contracted consumption and was forced to leave the service in October 1862. He recuperated and tried to return to field chaplaincy, but continued ill health denied him that opportunity, and he eventually returned to Notre Dame.



*Among the chaplains Notre Dame University supplied to serve Civil War troops were Father James Dillon (center) and Father William Corby (right).*

Father Corby attended to the religious needs of the 88th New York regiment of the Irish Brigade. At Gettysburg he delivered the famous general absolution, not only of his regiment, but of all of Caldwell's 1st Division of Hancock's Second Corps. Hancock himself was seen at the absolution, and took his hat off in respect to Father Corby. Statues of Father Corby overlook the battlefield of Gettysburg and the Notre Dame campus, his right arm raised in the action of absolving the troops. Because this pose resembles a punt or kick returner about to field an unreturnable ball, he is referred to as "Fair Catch Corby."

There were chaplains in the western theater as well. Among the notable were Father Peter Cooney of the 35th Indiana, who regularly returned to Indiana to deliver money to the families of the soldiers. He spent the duration with his beloved 35th Indiana and became a charter member of the Notre Dame chapter of the Grand Army of the Republic.

A request from Ellen Sherman (Mrs. William T. Sherman) prompted Father Sorin to provide Grant's Army of the Mississippi with a Catholic clerical presence. Father Joseph Carrier served briefly with the 6th Missouri in the later stages of the Vicksburg siege, but his was only a 3-month hitch.

Some priests tended to the wounded. Father Julian Bourget served briefly at the military hospital at Mound City, Illinois. By mid-June of 1862, he himself became a victim of malaria. Another priest risking his well-being at a hospital was Father Zepherin Leveque. He died of sheer physical exhaustion in February 1862. Nuns also participated; some 63 served in ten hospitals in the western theater including Mound City, Memphis, Cairo, and Paducah. The "Nuns of the Battlefield" are preserved in memory by a statue in Washington, DC.

An unsung story (one not related by Father Bob) is about Catholic Sisters of Charity of Emmitsburg, Maryland. As soon as the battle at Gettysburg had ended on Friday, July 3, 1863, a cart carrying sixteen nuns and an elderly priest entered the area, and they immediately started helping by removing the wounded from the battlefield, running food kitchens, and praying for the dead. Most notably, they also worked as nurses because they had learned skills that the average American woman hadn't at that point.

I wish to thank Father Miller for his vivid presentation of the priests and nuns who served the religious needs of the Catholic Civil War soldiers and tended to the needs of wounded and dying of all religions and of both sides.

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## January Events

### **January 4, Lake County Civil War Round Table.**

Open discussion on Wilson's Creek.

**January 13, Civil War Museum, Kenosha, WI.** Sarah Emma Edmonds, aka Private Frank Thompson, is the topic of a presentation at 12 noon sponsored by the Milwaukee Civil War Round Table and the Iron Brigade Association. Information on all museum events is available at (262) 653-4140 or [www.thecivilwarmuseum.org](http://www.thecivilwarmuseum.org).

### **January 13, Chicago Civil War Round Table.**

Parker Hills will speak on Chickamauga.

**January 21, Tenth Annual Civil War Symposium,** Midway Village Museum, Rockford. Featured speaker will be Michael Burlingame, chair of Lincoln Studies at the University of Illinois at Springfield and author of *Abraham Lincoln: A Life*. Other speakers are Thomas Johnson on

Rockford Was Lincoln Country and Bruce Allardice on Snatching Defeat from the Jaws of Victory: The Ten Worst Civil War Generals. The Battlefield Balladeers will perform Civil War-era music at lunch time. Cost of \$28 includes a box lunch. Register at (815) 397-9112.

**January 28, 2012, Executive Committee meeting** at 9:00 a.m. at the Allens' home, 755 Fox Trail Terrace, Cary; (847) 516-6429 home or (847) 508-9974 cell. Breakfast will be served.

**January 28, Civil War Museum, Kenosha, WI.** Cushing's Battery and the Historical Timekeepers living history groups will be at the museum from 11:00 a.m. till 4:00 p.m. Steve Michaels will talk on Our Invisible Civil War Memorials at 1 p.m. Information on all museum events is available at (262) 653-4140 or [www.thecivilwarmuseum.org](http://www.thecivilwarmuseum.org).



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## Roster Changes

### New recruits

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1418 Mill Creek Drive  
Buffalo Grove, Illinois 60089-4219  
(312) 479-1205

Mr. Kurt Carlson  
124C South County Farm Road  
Wheaton, Illinois 60187-4596

Mr. Daniel Josephs  
1175 South Euclid Avenue  
Oak Park, Illinois 60304-2030

## 2011–2012 Speakers

February 3	Paula Walker	Major General G. K. Warren and the Battle of Five Forks
March 2	James Ogden	To Be Determined
April 6	Rick Andresen	Reconstruction, Part II
May 4	Thomas Cartwright	To Be Determined
June 1	Craig Symonds	To Be Determined

## December Raffle

The December raffle winners were Mary Banks, who won *The Cavalry at Gettysburg* by Edward G. Longacre, and Tom DeFranco, who won *Civil War Curiosities* by Webb Garrison, both donated by Emil Bahnmeier; Jan Rasmussen, who won *Sherman* by Lloyd Lewis; and Alisa Corsi, who won *Chancellorsville* by Stephen W. Sears. 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.

## Sites Committee

The Sites Committee met November 19, 2011, and voted unanimously to donate \$200 to the Civil War Museum, Kenosha, WI; \$100 to Camp Butler, Springfield, IL; \$100 to Perryville, KY; \$200 to Ft. Sumter/Ft. Moultrie, SC; and \$200 to Camp Douglas, Chicago, IL.

The picture of the Illinois Monument at Vicksburg presented by Jerry Allen at the meeting is to be framed by Kathleen Lange for use as a raffle item at the June banquet.

## January 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 January 21, 2012, from 10:00 a.m. until noon. A discussion of the events of 1862 will begin. 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.

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