



# THE drum roll

Volume 37      356th Regular Meeting  
Number 5      January 4, 2019

## *Canal was strategically important to both sides*

Friday, January 4, 2019, 7:30 p.m.

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

### Chesapeake and Ohio Canal During the Civil War



Charlie Banks

**C**harlie Banks, a long-time member of the Northern Illinois and Chicago Civil War Round Tables, has been interested in the Civil War since his youth. Currently, he is also vice-president of the McHenry County CWRT and conducts the book raffle and is sites chairman for NICWRT and the CWRT of Chicago. His favorite subjects are, of course, railroads and the Maryland Campaign of 1862, and battles and Civil War sites in Maryland.

On January 4, 2019, Banks will discuss the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal during the Civil War, drawing on his considerable knowledge of this infrastructure and this aspect of the war, and will

present a history and the importance of this vital lifeline of transportation for the Union during the war.

The C&O Canal runs alongside the Potomac River. The river was a dividing line between the Union and the Confederacy during the Civil War. The canal was strategically important to both sides. Union forces protected the canal and used it for transportation purposes, moving troops, coal, and war supplies. Confederates tried to damage both the canal and boat traffic.

The canal became the subject of many raids by famous Confederate cavalymen such as Jeb Stuart and John Mosby. Canal mules were taken for the war efforts of both the North and the South. Both sides used the towpath as a road when war came into the state of Maryland. As an important mode of transportation, the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal was just as important before and after the Civil War as it was during the conflict. It was a barrier for any armies that crossed the Potomac River going north or south. The C&O Canal is a story of an epic struggle to keep a business going during the Civil War due to raids, army crossings, floods, and destruction of property.

Banks enjoys fishing, walking the fields of the Civil War, and playing board games, Civil War and World War II. He works as a CNC machinist and has been married to his wife, Mary, for 29 years and shares the same anniversary date as Mary and Abraham Lincoln.

If you would like to join us for dinner with Charlie Banks at 5:30 p.m. before the meeting on January 4 at Sam's of Arlington restaurant, 1863 West Central Road, Arlington Heights, please contact me at waynerhine@gmail.com or (847) 363-0875 by Wednesday, January 2. —

*Wayne Rhine*

**The January meeting will be back at the Arlington Heights Memorial Library**

# Illinois Regiments in the Civil War

By Pat McCormick

**O**n December 7, 2018, the Northern Illinois Civil War Round Table was visited by a living legend: Chief Historian Emeritus of the National Park Service, Ed Bearss. His subject for the evening, delivered in his inimitable style, was the Illinois contribution to the war.

Having spent the majority of his career at Vicksburg National Military Park, Bearss fittingly used that park to launch his survey of the Illinois story. The Illinois Monument, which is the largest monument at Vicksburg, served as his framing reference. More soldiers from Illinois served in the Vicksburg campaign than from any other state, and the monument itself tells that story remarkably well.

The Illinois Monument was designed by William LeBaron Jenney, who had been the chief engineer of the Union's Fifteenth Corps. (Jenney is most renowned for designing the world's first skyscraper, in Chicago.) The design was based on the Pantheon in Rome, and its interior lists every Illinoisian connected to the campaign. Forty-nine steps — one for each day of the Vicksburg siege — lead to the interior, a rotunda with an open-air circle at its peak.

Bearss mentioned that, according to legend, it never rains inside the monument; he revealed that standing in the center during a rainstorm will debunk that idea pretty quickly. He also stated that the similar Pennsylvania Monument at Gettysburg — naturally, more famous because it *is* at Gettysburg — was based on the Illinois design.

The interior of the monument furnished the specific Illinois subjects chosen for Bearss's survey. Etched in marble on the higher level of the wall are the names of prominent Illinois officers from the Vicksburg campaign, mostly generals (and some colonels who commanded brigades). Three leaders' names are displayed in medallions: Abraham Lincoln, Illinois governor Richard Yates, and Ulysses S. Grant. (Elsewhere on the wall, Grant's son Fred, 13 years old at the time, is listed; he accompanied his father for much of the

campaign and even took a slight wound at one point.)

Of the three top Illinoisians, Bearss chose to highlight Ulysses S. Grant. Despite his Illinois connection, Grant was not a native of the state, but was originally from Ohio. Graduating with the West Point class of 1842, he distinguished himself in the Mexican war, and then stayed in the army as a quartermaster (a post which, Bearss pointed out, was far more important in the army at that time than it is today).

Grant eventually found himself on the West Coast, where — suffering under a martinet post commander and separated from his wife, Julia — he took to drink and was forced to resign. (Bearss mentioned that the post commander, who served in the Civil War, must have been deeply concerned for his future when Grant ascended to the top spot in the Army in 1864.)

Sailing home from California, Grant was short of funds after landing in New York, and his army friend Simon Bolivar Buckner — who would one day surrender Fort Donelson to Grant — was able to give Grant assistance so he could return to Julia in St. Louis. (An officer with an even more prominent Confederate future, James Longstreet, had been best man at Grant's wedding.)

Finding no financial success in Missouri, Grant eventually took a position with his father's tanning business in Galena, Illinois — thus finally connecting him with our state, from which he would enter Union service in 1861. (Bearss noted that Grant's younger brother Orville, who worked alongside him in Galena, would eventually be embroiled in scandal during the Grant presidency, and that younger brothers are often the bane of presidents.) In relating Grant's initial difficulty in finding a wartime assignment due to his tainted past, Bearss compared the antebellum army to the National Park Service — a “bunch of gossips.”

From Grant, Bearss moved to the lower portion of the monument wall, where the rosters of all the Illinois regiments in the campaign are displayed on bronze plaques. He chose to briefly pinpoint a



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#### Appointed Positions

<b>Book Raffle</b>	<b>Charles Banks</b>
<b>Newsletter Editor</b>	<b>Sally Smith</b>

## Book Raffle

The lucky winners at the December book raffle were Alfred Kitch, who won *John Brown’s Spy: The Adventurous Life and Tragic Confession of John E. Cook* by Steven Lubet; Bruce Graham, who won *Illustrated Atlas of the Civil War* by Time-Life Books; Phillip Thornton, who won *Under the Crescent Moon with the XI Corps in the Civil War* by James S. Pula; Bruce Allardice, who won *The New York City Draft Riots: Their Significance for American Society and Politics in the Age of the Civil War* by Iver Bernstein; Janet Linhart, who won *The Civil War in 50 Objects* by Harold Holzer and the New-York Historical Society; Don Hatch, who won *Sherman’s March* by Time-Life Books; and Michael Kirschner, who won *Lincoln at Gettysburg* by Garry Wills.

Congratulations to the winners and sincere thanks to the donors.

### January Events

**January 11, Second Friday Lecture Series,** Civil War Museum, Kenosha, WI. Greg Burek, M.D. will speak on PTSD and the Civil War Soldier. Free program is sponsored by the Milwaukee Civil War Roundtable and the Iron Brigade Association. Information on all Civil War Museum programs is available at (262) 653-4140 or [www.thecivilwarmuseum.org](http://www.thecivilwarmuseum.org).

**January 11, Chicago Civil War Round Table.** Bjorn Skaptasan will speak on Henry Morton Stanley at Shiloh.

**January 18, Civil War Museum, Kenosha, WI.** Doug Dammann and Jenn Edginton will present a program on King Cotton, exploring the role of cotton and slavery in the Southern economy through a classroom experience for adults, noon.

**January 18, Salt Creek Civil War Round Table.** Georgiann Baldino will speak on A Family and Nation Under Fire.

**January 19, Civil War Museum, Kenosha, WI.** Jeff Kannel will speak on Black Badgers in “White” Regiments, noon.

### 2018–2019 Speakers

February 1	Harold Knudsen	The 1864 Schleswig–Holstein War
March 1	Bruce Allardice	‘Damn the Torpedoes’: Hi-Tech Rebs and Their Infernal Machines
April 5	Dan Patterson	The Origin of the Longstreet Controversy
May 3	Rob Girardi	To be determined
June 7	Matthew Switlick	Loomis Battery

**To learn more about the Northern Illinois Civil War Round Table  
visit our website at [www.northernilcwrt.org](http://www.northernilcwrt.org)**

few of the units or soldiers therein. Galena's own 45th Illinois, the "Lead Mine Regiment," provided a precursor to the famous — and much larger — Petersburg crater explosion. During the Vicksburg siege, the 45th mined under the 3rd Louisiana Redan (just up the road from the Illinois monument), but despite a successful explosion, the Confederates managed to seal the breach.

In the 99th Illinois, Irishman T. J. Higgins carried the regimental colors in a charge on the 2nd Texas Lunette and made it over the parapet, not knowing that the rest of his unit had fallen back and that he had finished the charge alone.

In another Illinois unit was an unusual soldier named Albert Cashier, who was actually a woman named Jennie Hodgers. She lived as a man after the war, her gender undiscovered until an automobile accident in the early 20th century. Given that Illinois had tens of thousands of soldiers in the Vicksburg campaign — and more regimental monuments in the military park than any other state — it was impossible for Bearss to highlight more than a select few individuals and units.

He moved on to stressing one of the key benefits of the existence of military parks: the ability to walk the grounds. Bearss wrote his dissertation on Patrick Cleburne, and in studying Cleburne's role at Shiloh had accepted the notion that the death of Albert S. Johnston may have cost the South the battle. But walking the ground at the battlefield changed his mind (the formidable Dill Branch Ravine being a key). He also stressed that knowing the vegetation on the battlefield is vital as well, using his own experiences with the Marines at Cape Gloucester during World War II to illustrate the point.

His initial Shiloh experience also taught him that battlefield parks had more than "Smokey Bear Rangers": they had park historians. This led him to his posting at Vicksburg — the only park that had a historian position available when he completed his schooling. The move to Vicksburg led to his increasing interest in the war in the West, as opposed to the Eastern "prestige" parks.

After being advanced to the NPS headquarters in Washington, Bearss learned that he much preferred speaking to an audience (and paying attention to their reactions) to reading from a paper, and that speaking was more likely to hold the au-

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dience's attention. He cited one government official who told Bearss that his presentation was "The first decent testimony I've heard all year."

The world of Civil War history is better for Ed Bearss's revelation concerning speaking, and on behalf of the round table I would like to thank him for speaking once more to us.

## **January 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, Barrington, on Saturday, January 19, from 10:00 a.m. until noon. Pat McCormick will lead the discussion on the Tullahoma Campaign.

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.

## **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 to 11:30 a.m. On January 5, 2019, the group will discuss Sherman's march through the Carolinas.

## **Women's Civil War Book Club**

The Civil War book club for women will meet at the home of Connie Rawa, at The Grand at Twin Lakes Senior Living, 920 East Northwest Highway, Palatine, at 2 p.m. on Saturday, February 16. They will discuss William Tecumseh Sherman; attendees can read any book on him. If you are interested in joining the group, contact Denise Limburg at [dlimburg@prodigy.net](mailto:dlimburg@prodigy.net) or (847) 212-5313 or Mary Banks at (847) 497-3149 or [zeller1@comcast.net](mailto:zeller1@comcast.net).

## **It's a Fact**

At least 15 Confederate and 26 Union generals died of various diseases during the Civil War.

—*A Military Miscellany* by Thomas Ayres