



THE drum roll

Volume 32 308th Regular Meeting
Number 7 March 7, 2014

What if McClellan had won?

Friday, March 7, 2014, 7:30 p.m.

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

The 1864 Presidential Election

It is hard for modern Americans to believe that Abraham Lincoln, one of history's most beloved presidents, feared defeat in his reelection attempt in 1864. How could this happen? First, the country had not reelected an incumbent president since Andrew Jackson in 1832. Lincoln's embrace of emancipation was still a problem for many voters. And while most people thought the Union was winning the war, the progress was painfully slow and bloody. Many northerners preferred a negotiated peace — one that would restore the Union but drop emancipation.

Perhaps the one fleeting chance the Confederacy had to win the war occurred in 1864, when northern voters were forced to decide, by their votes, whether to continue the war. The contest between President Lincoln, a committed pro-war Republican, and Democrat George McClellan, uncertain in politics as he was in generalship, played out against a backdrop of the ever-widening war, was perhaps the most important election in U.S. history. Did McClellan have a real chance to win? If he had won, what might have been the consequences for the war, and for the Union? Expect some unexpected answers from this talk.

A professor of history at South Suburban College, Bruce S. Allardice is past president of the Northern Illinois Civil War Round Table and past

president of the Civil War Round Table of Chicago.

A lifelong Chicago-area resident and long-suffering White Sox fan, Allardice has authored or coauthored six books and numerous articles on the Civil War, including

Texas Burial Sites of Civil War Notables (Hill College, 2002). His *More Generals in Gray* (LSU Press 1995) was a selection of the History Book Club.

He had two books come out in 2008: *Confederate Colonels: A Biographical Register* (U of MO Press), a biographical register of Confederate army colonels, and *Kentuckians in Gray* (U Press of KY), co-authored with Professor Larry Hewitt. He authored an essay on General Stephen D. Lee for Vol. 3 of *Confederate Generals in the Western Theater* (U of TN Press). His article on "The Election of 1862 in Illinois" appeared in 2011 in the *Journal of the Illinois Historical Society*. His latest book is *Two Years Before the Paddlewheel: Charles F. Gunther, Mississippi River Confederate* (State House Press, 2012), the edited diary of Charles F. Gunther, a Confederate steamboat officer who later became Chicago's leading candy maker. He has also coauthored two articles on Civil War baseball published in the journal *Base Ball*.

A graduate of the University of Illinois, Allardice has given numerous lectures and presentations on the Civil War and genealogy for Civil War Round Tables, museums, and civic organizations, including several presentations to this round table.



Bruce Allardice

Save June 6 for the annual banquet

He 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 on the board of the Illinois State Historical Society. 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.

Recently his article, "The Rise of Baseball in the South" received an award for Best Baseball History article of 2012.

If you would like to join us for dinner with Bruce Allardice at 5:30 p.m. before the meeting on March 7, 2014, at Sam's of Arlington restaurant, 1863 West Central Road, Arlington Heights, please contact me at (847) 577-7744 or dlimburg@prodigy.net by Wednesday, March 5. — *Denise Limburg*

When Genealogy Merges with American History

By Tom DeFranco

On February 7, 2014, Doug Stiles, an attorney from Waukegan, met with the Northern Illinois Civil War Round Table to present the case of a family mystery that was finally solved weeks after President Lincoln's 200th birthday.

It all started for our speaker after he interviewed his mother about some maternal ancestors. Stiles realized that it would be harder to gather information about his paternal side since his father had already passed away. So he interviewed his Uncle Dave (his grandfather's brother) in 1972. Uncle Dave showed him a newspaper clipping about a claim that his great-grandfather J. W. Dillon made about inscribing Abraham Lincoln's watch. Uncle Dave promised Stiles that he would send him a letter verifying the existence of said inscription inside the watch.

Many years had passed and three children had been born when in 2008 Stiles received a letter from Waterford, Ireland. It was from a cousin. He fulfilled the promise made by the now late Uncle Dave. The letter described the watch and told Stiles what the inscription stated: "April 13, 1861,

on this date Ft. Sumter was attacked. Thank God we have a president who will try."

Stiles's investigation revealed that Lincoln commonly carried one of two pocket watches, one with a hook at the end of the chain and another with a bar at the end. The watch that he was looking for had the hooked end.

The photographs in a book about Lincoln substantiated his ancestor's story, but not definitively. Stiles discovered that at least one of the watches was housed in the Kentucky History Museum. He called and was told by the curator that they have the watch with the bar. She told him the other was in the Smithsonian Institution. On February 12, 2009, Stiles called the Smithsonian Institution,

reached Harry Rubenstein, and told him the story of the inscription. Rubenstein was skeptical as, even though he had heard the story of an inscription, he could never find it. Stiles faxed a copy of his cousin's letter, and Rubenstein's interest was piqued enough to order the watch opened.

So, in mid-March of that year the watch was ceremoniously opened with Doug Stiles as the guest of honor — and there it was — an inscription very much as J. W. Dillon stated: "J. W. Dil-



President Abraham Lincoln's watch
(Smithsonian Institution photograph)

lon, April 13, 1861, on this date Ft. Sumter was attacked. Thank God we have a government.” Ironically another inscription also was visible: “L. E. Gross, Jeff Davis.” Apparently, after Dillon had moved to New York, Lincoln had the watch in the shop for repairs again. Gross was a pro-

Confederate Washingtonian who had a brother in Confederate cavalry service. Unlikely family history had indeed merged with American history.

On behalf of the round table, my thanks to Doug Stiles for the intriguing story of a new-found family brush with greatness.

March Events

March 11, McHenry County Civil War Round Table. Don Purn will speak on Soldiers of McHenry County, Colored Units, and Soldiers Home.

March 13, Lake County Civil War Round Table. Ken Suskin will speak on Brigadier General Galusha Pennypacker.

March 14, Civil War Museum, Kenosha, WI. Jeff Kannell will discuss the 29th U.S. Colored Troops, Wisconsin’s Black Civil War Company, noon. This program is sponsored by the Milwaukee Civil War Round Table and the Iron Brigade Association. Information on all Civil War Museum programs is available at (262) 653-4140 or www.thecivilwarmuseum.org.

March 14, Chicago Civil War Round Table. Aaron Barnhart will speak on Price’s 1864 Missouri Raid.

March 15, Civil War Museum, Kenosha, WI. Seminar explores the civilian experience during the Civil War era. Dr. Kerry Trask will speak on the War at Home and the Creation of Community in Wisconsin, Kathleen Ernst on Maryland Civilians in the Antietam Campaign, Brett Barker on Why the Northern Homefront Matters, and Robert Miller on Religion in American Culture on the Eve of War, 8:30 a.m.–3:30 p.m., \$60/\$50 members, includes lunch.

March 21, Salt Creek Civil War Round Table. Cindy Intravartolo will speak on the Holy Cross Sisters During the Civil War: From Teaching to Nursing.

March 29, 4th Annual Civil War Expo, Civil War Museum, Kenosha, WI. Living history and heritage groups from around the Midwest will introduce visitors to their programs and interpretation, 10 a.m.–3 p.m. Robert Girardi will examine what Civil War generals wrote, said, and thought about each other, 1 p.m.

Book Review

For the most part, William Sherman used maneuver to continually press Joseph Johnston south through Georgia in the 1864 Atlanta Campaign. However, at Kennesaw Mountain in late June, Sherman made his one attempt to break Johnston’s lines by direct frontal assault. Earl Hess’s 2013 book, *Kennesaw Mountain*, provides an in-depth look at that signal event. Hess spends a chapter summarizing the campaign to mid-June, and then dives into detail on the Kennesaw operations for the meat of the book, starting with Kolb’s Farm on June 22 and continuing through the main assaults on June 27 and the days following the main attack. He then provides a brief account of the Union flanking moves that took Sherman to the banks of the Chattahoochee River.

For those with a love of detailed combat accounts at the regimental level, Hess does not disappoint in his blow-by-blow (and sector-by-sector) description. Despite the detail, the narrative flows well. As in any such book worth its salt, Hess does not skimp on analysis, both interspersed throughout the narrative and in a concluding chapter. Finally, in a most unusual appendix, Hess — who has written a great deal about Civil War entrenchments — goes into great detail in describing the modern-day earthwork remnants along the entire six-mile length of the modern battlefield. The book is both a great read and an indispensable companion for a tour of the park. — *Pat McCormick*

Recruitment Committee Meeting

The Northern Illinois Civil War Round Table recruitment committee will meet at 9:00 a.m. on March 15, 2014, at the Hoffman Estates Community Bank prior to the round table discussion scheduled for that day.



2013–14 Officers and Trustees

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Appointed Positions

Book Raffle	Charles Banks
Newsletter Editor	Sally Smith

March Saturday Discussion

All members and guests are invited to participate in the session to be held at the Hoffman Estates Community Bank, 1375 Palatine Road, Hoffman Estates, on Saturday, March 15, from 10:00 a.m. until noon. Attendees are asked to park in the adjacent lot rather than in spaces provided for bank customers. The discussion of the Atlanta Campaign will be led by second vice president Patrick McCormick.

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.

2013–2014 Speakers

April 4, David Keller will speak on Camp Douglas.

May 2, Betty Kay will speak on Three Illinois Women During the Civil War.

June 6, Tim Smith will speak on Corinth.

February Raffle

The February raffle winners were Mary Banks, who won *Mary: Mrs. A. Lincoln* by Janis Cooke Newman, and Charles Brenneman, who won *The Insanity File: The Case of Mary Todd Lincoln* by Mark E. Neely, Jr., and R. Gerald McMurtry, both donated by Ed Stipulin; David Noe, who won *The Long Road to Antietam: How the Civil War Became a Revolution* by Richard Slotkin, donated by Charles Banks; Jerry Allen, who won *Touched by Fire: A National Historical Society Photographic Portrait of the Civil War*, edited by William C. Davis, donated by Ron Bayers; and Danielle Kafka, who won *Encyclopedia of American History, Volume 5*.

Congratulations to the winners and sincere thanks to the donors. To donate Civil War-related books or items, please contact Charlie Banks.

Book Discussion Group

The Civil War book discussion group led by Tom DeFranco at the Eisenhower Library, 4613 North Oketo, Harwood Heights, meets on the first Saturday of the month from 10 until 11:30 a.m. On March 1 they will begin discussing Gordon Rhea's three-part series on the Wilderness Campaign.

Women's Civil War Book Club

The next book for the Civil War book club for women is *The Year of Jubilo: A Novel of the Civil War* by Howard Bahr. The next meeting of the group is scheduled for late April, time and place to be announced. 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 (847) 497-3149.

**To learn more about this Round Table call Ellen Allen at (847) 516-6429
or visit our website at www.northernilcwrt.org**