



# THE drum roll

402nd Regular Meeting Volume 41 Number 4 December 1, 2023



## PLEASE NOTE!!!!!!

The December meeting will be in person at the Arlington Hts. Historical Society on Friday, December 1, 2023, and on ZOOM, at 7:00 P.M. The Arlington Hts. Museum is located at 110 W. Fremont St. in Arlington Hts. This is across the street from the library, just west.

Rob Girardi will be our speaker for December. Our speaker's topic is: Stonewall Jackson: The Man, the Myth and the Legend

Thomas Jonathan Jackson, better known as Stonewall Jackson, rose from humble beginnings to become one of the most widely recognized generals of the Civil War. His successes in the Shenandoah Valley and other battlefields made him world famous. His exploits became legendary. He was lionized as one of the great leaders of the Confederacy. After the war, his death was lamented as a reason for Confederate defeat, and he became a mythological god in the Confederate pantheon. This remained true for

generations. Now, however, Stonewall Jackson is being removed from the historic landscape. How did the man become a legend, and where does he stand today?

## About Rob Girardi

Robert I. Girardi has had a lifelong fascination with the Civil War. He has studied all aspects of the war, and has tramped over many of the battlefields and related sites. He has collected artifacts and memorabilia and has read through thousands of documents, letters, and diaries written by participants, thereby developing an understanding of the important issues of the war and a sense of what the soldiers experienced.

Robert earned his M.A. in Public History at Loyola University of Chicago in 1991. He is a past president of the Civil War Round Table of Chicago and a past vice president and newsletter editor of the Salt Creek Civil War Round Table. He belongs to two other Civil War round tables in the Chicago area. He is a fellow of the Company of Military Historians and is an associate

member of the Sons of Union Veterans. He is on

the editorial review board of the Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society and was the guest editor of the 2011-2014 Civil War Sesquicentennial issues. He was the winner of the 2010 Chicago Civil War Round Table's prestigious Nevins-Freeman Award. In 2012 he was named to the board of directors of the Illinois State Historical Society, and sat on the board of directors of the Camp Douglas Restoration Society 2013-2018. In 2014 he was awarded the Milwaukee Civil War Round Table's Iron Brigade Association Award for Civil War scholarship. He was an extra in the movie, *Andersonville*.

Robert created a Civil War exhibit for the Bureau County Historical Society in Princeton, Illinois, and has consulted for the Chicago History Museum (Chicago Historical Society), and has collaborated with his good friend, historical artist Keith Rocco, and historian/authors Peter Cozzens, Nathaniel Cheairs Hughes Jr., Theodore J. Karamanski, A. Wilson Greene, and others.

He has spoken to historical societies, libraries, schools at all levels, and Civil War groups all over the United States. He is a well-known authority on the subject in the Chicago area where he has been interviewed on radio, television, and in the newspaper on all aspects of the Civil War.

Robert is a popular speaker and consultant on the American Civil War to audiences of all ages, at schools at all levels, museums, libraries, historical societies, Civil War Round Tables, and other organizations.

Robert has spoken at Loyola University, Xavier College, Dominican University, Harper College and Lewis University. He is a frequent presenter at the annual Illinois History Conference and the Illinois State History Symposium in Springfield, Illinois, and the Midwest Civil War Museum in Kenosha, Wisconsin. He has spoken to Civil War Round Tables and historical societies all over Illinois, and in Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New Hampshire, Ohio, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and Wisconsin.

Robert I. Girardi lives and works in Chicago, Illinois.

## GRANT AT CHATTANOOGA

The Union victory at Chattanooga in November 1863 is sometimes depicted as one that went according to the script developed by Ulysses S. Grant. But was this the case? On November 3, Dave Powell tackled that subject.

Powell opened with a postwar quote from William T. Sherman, who referred to Chattanooga as a "plan [that] succeeded admirably," asking the group to keep that in mind. He made note of the importance of Chattanooga, including its status as the only water-level gap in the mountains for hundreds of miles and thus its importance as a railroad connection. Moving on to Grant himself, Powell detailed the inactive status of Grant's army since the fall of Vicksburg, having been parceled out for various lesser missions.

The general's fortune changed when William Rosecrans was besieged in Chattanooga. Called east to meet with Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, Grant was promoted to command of the newly created Military Division of the Mississippi, encompassing the departments (and armies) of the Tennessee, the Cumberland, and the Ohio. The order came with two options: Retain Rosecrans in command of the Army of the Cumberland, or replace him with George Thomas. Grant chose the latter (though as Powell pointed out, Stanton wanted Old Rosy gone, and the "choice" may have been for appearances only. Grant and Rosecrans not being on good terms, the latter would have been gone in any case).

Grant soon arrived in Chattanooga and discovered that excellent plans were in place to open a solid supply line; in his memoirs, Grant famously said that "My only wonder was that he had not carried them out." There was no "wonder" about it; Rosecrans had been making preparations but things weren't ready until late October - right around the time Grant arrived. Included in the plan was a contingent from the Army of the Potomac under Joseph Hooker, who weren't ready until Grant's arrival either. (A portion of Grant's former Army of the Tennessee, under Sherman, was on the way as well but weeks away.)

The opening of the supply line went into operation in the early hours of October 27, when troops from the Army of the Cumberland seized Brown's Ferry and Hooker linked up with them. The next night a small portion of James Longstreet's Rebel corps attacked at Wauhatchie, but failed. The new "Cracker Line" was established, and Chattanooga was no longer in danger of starvation.

It would still be some time before the forces at Chattanooga would be ready to lift the partial siege, though. Powell stressed that, during this entire time, Grant had a major ancillary concern: Ambrose Burnside's Army of the Ohio. Burnside had occupied Knoxville in early September – achieving a long-standing goal of President Lincoln's – and the administration constantly reminded Grant of the importance of that occupation. Not long after the opening of the Cracker Line, Braxton Bragg sent a significant force to threaten Burnside (chiefly Longstreet's Corps, whose commander Bragg was happy to be rid of.) In early November, Grant ordered Thomas to attack the north end of Missionary Ridge, to drive a wedge between Bragg and Longstreet, possibly forcing the latter's recall – but to Grant's frustration, the recovering Cumberlanders were in no shape (especially logistically) to make the effort. Other than a cavalry raid by Union colonel Eli Long, who not only cut the rail connection between Bragg and Longstreet but destroyed the South's only copper rolling mill, further efforts would have to wait.

It was over two weeks later, with Sherman finally on the scene, when all was ready. Grant's initial plan gave the starring role to Sherman, his most trusted subordinate, leading Grant's old army; Grant did not fully trust the Cumberland army (November 7 no doubt contributing to that). Sherman was to seize the north end of Missionary Ridge, turning the Confederate flank and interposing between Bragg and Longstreet (East Tennessee still being a major factor in planning.) Hooker, on the Union right, was to demonstrate against Lookout Mountain, hopefully drawing

troops away from Sherman's front, while Thomas in the center would maintain a threat.

Before the operation got fully started, things went awry. One of Sherman's divisions was stranded south of Chattanooga when the pontoon bridge broke, leaving it in Hooker's jurisdiction. That general (with three divisions – each from a different corps of a different army) turned his demonstration into an attack, seizing Lookout Mountain on November 24<sup>th</sup>. That same day Sherman moved against the other flank and thought he was on Missionary Ridge, only to discover by the morning of the 25<sup>th</sup> that he was on a separate hill. That day Sherman's attacks were a bloody failure; Grant ordered Thomas to seize the base of Missionary Ridge to relieve the pressure on Sherman. After doing so, Thomas' four divisions exceeded their orders and kept going, storming the ridge and sending Bragg in retreat. The siege was raised.

Powell circled back to the Sherman quote from the beginning – was this a plan that succeeded admirably? Far from it. The sequence of events wound up bearing little resemblance to Grant's plan. But this is not a knock against Grant. Powell maintained that, in fact, depicting this as a perfectly executed plan does Grant a disservice, by ignoring one of his greatest strengths: his determination. Nothing went like it was supposed to, but Grant kept his eye on the prize, adjusted to the situation, and won. That was his true genius.

On behalf of the Round Table I would like to thank Dave Powell for his revealing account of Grant at Chattanooga.

Pat McCormick

## Upcoming Events

### Speaker lineup

Sept. 1, 2023: Jerry Allen: Old Abe the War Eagle  
Oct. 6, 2023: Bruce Allardice: "Loose Lips"--  
Military Secrecy During the Civil War  
Nov. 3, 2023: Dave Powell Grant at Chattanooga  
Dec. 1, 2023 Rob Girardi Stonewall Jackson  
Jan. 5, 2024: Larry Hewitt Port Hudson  
Feb. 2, 2024: Dennis Doyle TBA  
Mar. 1, 2024: Steve Alban: The Election of 1860  
Apr. 5, 2024: Leslie Goddard TBA  
May 3, 2024: Jon Sebastian TBA  
June 7, 2024: Diana Dretske: The 96<sup>th</sup> Illinois

At this time, we are not charging dues for the 2023-2024 year.

Join Zoom Meeting on Friday, Dec. 1, 2023, at 7 PM

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81433758155?pwd=S1FqVjJ1WmZsTTd1VlJNRCtLcjJLdz09>

Important Announcements!!!!!!

Our Saturday discussion will be on the second Saturday of December, the 9<sup>th</sup>! The topic will be: EARLY 1864: GRANT TAKES COMMAND. The link works for this meeting. Don't miss it.

A big THANK YOU to Susan Hirsch for taking on the role of Trustee. We all appreciate your effort.



### 2023-24 Officers and Trustees

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### Appointed Positions

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