



THE drum roll

Volume 37 358th Regular Meeting
Number 7 March 1, 2019

10,000 Confederate soldiers are buried in Illinois

Friday, March 1, 2019, 7:30 p.m.

Arlington Heights Historical Museum
110 West Fremont Street, Arlington Heights, Illinois

Illinois Prisoner of War Camps



Rob Girardi

One does not generally think about Illinois being the site of prisoner of war camps, but during the Civil War four large camps were established in the state. These were Alton Prison, formerly the first Illinois State Penitentiary; Camp Butler, in Springfield; Camp Douglas, in Chicago; and Rock Island Prison.

Alton Prison was condemned before the war for health issues; Camps Butler and Douglas were training camps and never intended to house prisoners. Only Rock Island Prison was intended to be a formal prisoner of war facility.

Conditions in all the camps were bad, but Rock Island Prison and Camp Douglas were among the more notorious prison camps. A variety of factors

contributed to the high mortality rates, but the fact remains that 10,000 Confederate soldiers are buried in the Prairie State.

Rob Girardi will tell the stories at the March 1, 2019, meeting.

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 earned an M.A. in public history at Loyola University of Chicago in 1991. He served as an officer of the Civil War Round Table of Chicago and the Salt Creek Civil War Round Table and belongs to two other Civil War round tables in the Chicago area, including this one.

He is a fellow of the Company of Military Historians and 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 received the Chicago Civil War Round Table's Nevins-Freeman Award in 2010. In 2012 he was named to the board of directors of the Illinois State Historical Society, and he 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*.

Girardi has contributed articles to many historical journals and has written a number of books on Civil War subjects.

If you would like to join us for dinner with Rob Girardi at 5:30 p.m. before the meeting on March 1 at Sam's of Arlington restaurant, 1863 West Central Road, Arlington Heights, please contact Wayne Rhine at waynerhine@gmail.com or (847) 363-0875 by Wednesday, February 27.

The March meeting will be at the Arlington Heights History Museum

The Second Schleswig-Holstein War

By Pat McCormick

The United States was not the only country in the midst of a rebellion in 1864. On February 1, current round table president, Harold Knudsen, presented the story of a struggle with a number of parallels to the American Civil War: the Second Schleswig-Holstein War.

The battleground was in northern Europe, specifically Denmark, a country that, when superimposed on a map of the eastern United States, occupied roughly the distance between Washington, DC, and Richmond, VA. Denmark had long been established as a kingdom. A powerhouse in the Viking era, the country had been under one line of succession since the 900s. As the Age of Exploration progressed, the Danes joined many of their fellow European powers by establishing colonies in both Old World and New: a portion of India in 1658 and three islands in the Caribbean (the Danish West Indies) ten years later.

Denmark's chief opponent in early 1864 would be Prussia, the largest of a multitude of German states then in existence. The Germans had originally come down to west-central Europe from Scandinavia and mixed with the Celts who had come from Britain. The confederation of German states had originally been established by the grandson of Charlemagne, Louis the German, as part of the Holy Roman Empire. In 1848, a number of Germanic states had undergone revolutions, all of which had failed. (A significant number of these failed revolutionaries exiled themselves to America, and quite a few became military leaders in the American Civil War, the most famous, probably, being Franz Sigel.)

Within Denmark were several semi-autonomous duchies that were largely German in ethnicity: Schleswig, Holstein, and Lauenburg. In 1848–1850 these areas attempted to gain full independence, in what would become known as the First Schleswig-Holstein War. Eventually a peace was brokered by Great Britain; the resulting London Protocol reaffirmed the existing relationship and maintained the three duchies' semi-autonomous status.

However, in 1863 King Frederick VII of Denmark died. Because he was childless, the succession switched to a different line, that of Christian IX. The new ruler wished to completely absorb the duchies into Denmark, in violation of the protocol. Schleswig-Holstein enlisted the aid of their powerful brethren from militaristic Prussia, as well as Austria, and the result was war.

At the outset of the conflict, the Schleswig coalition had approximately 61,000 troops, soon to be reinforced to about 80,000, while the Danish had some 38,000. The Danes set up their defense primarily along an extended fortification called the Dannevirke (translation, the “Danish Line”), which ran generally along the frontier with Schleswig-Holstein. The line had long existed, and while it had been partially modified it still had weaknesses. Nonetheless, the Dannevirke was formidable, studded with forts that were connected by infantry earthworks. (Knudsen likened it to the impressive defenses of Washington, DC, during the Civil War. He also mentioned that there is a town in Nebraska called Dannevirke, in honor of the line. Also, portions of the line remain today.) The Danes anticipated that after the enemy coalition wore themselves out against the Dannevirke, they would be ripe for a sweep south by Danish forces.

The coalition's commander, Helmut von Moltke the Elder of Prussia (his son would formulate the attack plan Germany used at the outset of World War I), had other ideas. His main thrust would be to the east of the wall, where terrain and defenses were more forgiving. Crossing the Eider River on New Year's Day 1864, the attackers met the Danes in the first battle of the war, at Mysunde. The conflict started with an artillery duel, in which the attackers shot too high — shades of the Confederates at Gettysburg. The Prussian charge that followed failed after about two hours. Regardless, this opening battle had relatively light casualties, similar to early Civil War battles.

In command of the Danish defenders was Christian Julius De Mesa (Danish lineage in-

cluded Sephardic Jews from Spain), and he was confronted with terrain difficulties. For example, the waterways, which in summer might serve as obstacles to an attacker, were frozen over in mid-winter and thus offered the coalition easy access. De Mesa thus fell back rather than continuing the fight and, similar to Joseph Johnston in the Atlanta campaign, was heavily criticized and then relieved. After a rear-guard fight at Sankelmark, the Danes established themselves at Dybbøl and Fredericia, where Major General Georg Gerlach took over for De Mesa. The fallback was in the midst of brutal winter weather, and was likened to Napoleon's retreat from Moscow.

The new position was supported by the Danish Navy, while the coalition had no naval forces in the area. In particular, as in the American Civil War, the defenders had the aid of an ironclad warship, the *Rolfe Krake*. It had both steam and sail power, like most ocean-going vessels of the American war, and it had two revolving armored turrets, as with the Union monitors.

On the coalition side, Moltke wanted to keep the Danes from escaping to the islands in their rear. Rather than assault immediately, the attackers set up siege lines and dug parallels (laterals), which came under fire from the *Rolf Krake*. The overall situation calls to mind the Richmond-Petersburg siege of 1864–1865.

As at Petersburg, eventually the Prussians attacked at Dybbøl. They had an edge in weaponry: the “needle gun,” a bolt-action breechloader that could fire 10 rounds per minute, while the Danes still had muzzle loaders. Nonetheless, the forbid-

ding Danish position weathered several assaults. The Prussians made major attacks on March 28, April 4, and finally April 18 — the last attack after a period of artillery bombardment. The final attack at Dybbøl succeeded, and in early May the Austrian Navy defeated the Danish in the North Sea at the battle of Helgoland. Soon thereafter a cease-fire was put in place, then dropped — a cycle that repeated a time or two thereafter.

Finally, the Danes could see the writing on the wall and signed a preliminary peace treaty on August 1 (the treaty was then finalized on October 30). In the brief conflict, the defenders had lost some 1699 killed and 3131 captured; the Prussian-led coalition took some 1700 combined losses. The negotiated peace saw Denmark lose the three duchies (Schleswig, Holstein, and Lauenburg) plus some other territory. They regained the latter after World War I. The victory gave the major partner, Prussia, greater cachet on the European scene and solidified the influence of the Prussian leader Otto von Bismarck.

The war would ultimately give the German states a springboard to full unification; in 1870–1871 the Franco-Prussian war would enable the establishment of Germany as a single nation, and by the turn of the 20th Century Germany would be a world power. As Knudsen pointed out, having avoided fragmentation and thus re-unified in the Civil War, the United States also became a world power by 1900.

On behalf of the round table, I would like to thank Harold Knudsen for shedding light on this obscure, yet oddly familiar, European conflict.

March 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, March 16, from 10:00 a.m. until noon. Pat McCormick will lead the discussion on Rosecrans Crosses the Tennessee: the Start of the Chickamauga 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.

drum roll, March 2019

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 March 2, 2019, the group will discuss Averasboro, Bentonville, and the end of the war in North Carolina.





2017–18 Officers and Trustees

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2018–2019 Speakers

April 5, Dan Patterson on the Origin of the Longstreet Controversy.

May 3, Bruce Allardice on 'Damn the Torpedoes': Hi-Tech Rebs and Their Infernal Machines.

March Events

March 5, Civil War Museum, Kenosha, WI. Doug Dammann and Jenn Edginton will discuss Immigrant Stories of the Civil War, 7 p.m. Information on all Civil War Museum programs is available at (262) 653-4140 or www.thecivilwarmuseum.org.

March 8, Second Friday Lecture Series, Civil War Museum, Kenosha, WI. Shannon Sloan Spice will appear as Caroline Quarlls, a 16-year-old St.

Louis slave who fled to Milwaukee where local citizens helped her on a journey to Canada and to freedom, noon. Free program is sponsored by the Milwaukee Civil War Roundtable and the Iron Brigade Association.

March 8, Chicago Civil War Round Table. John David Smith and Michael Larson will speak on

Book Raffle

The lucky winners at the February book raffle were Alfred Kitch, who won *The Twentieth Maine* by John J. Pullen; Harold Chinick, who won *Pickett's Charge* by George R. Stewart; Walt Parus, who won *Sherman's Horsemen: Union Cavalry Operations in the Atlanta Campaign* by David Evans; Wayne Rhine, who won *A History of The Ninth Regiment: Illinois Volunteer Infantry, with the Regimental Roster* by Marion Morrison; Pat McCormick, who won *Morning at Wiltoughby Run: July 1, 1863* by Richard S. Shue; and Charlie Banks, who won *Stonewall's Man: Sandie Pendleton* by W. G. Bean, all donated by Kirby Smith.

Congratulations to the winners and sincere thanks to the donor.

Women's Civil War Book Club

The Civil War book club for women will meet at the home of Denise Limburg at 2 p.m. on Saturday, June 8, to discuss *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott. If you are interested in joining the group, contact Denise Limburg at (847) 212-5313 or dlimburg@prodigy.net or Mary Banks at (847) 497-3149 or zeller1@comcast.net.

Dear Delia; The Civil War Letters of Captain Henry F. Young, 7th Wisconsin Infantry.

March 12, McHenry County Civil War Round Table. Gordon Dammann will speak on Jonathan Letterman.

March 15, Salt Creek War Round Table. Dr. Mary Abroe will speak on Saving Antietam: 100 Years of Challenges Met and Lessons Learned.

March 16, Home Front Seminar, Civil War Museum, Kenosha, WI. Dr. Bonnie Laughlin-Schultz, Dan Hess, and Ronald Coddington will discuss the non-military and social history of the Civil War period in Wisconsin. Programs begin at 9:30 a.m., \$55 (\$40 Friends of the Museum) includes all programs, museum admission, lunch.

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