



THE drum roll

384th Regular Meeting Volume 40 Number 3 Nov. 4, 2022



The November meeting will be a ZOOM meeting on Friday, November 4, 2022, at 7 PM. Arlington Hts. Library was unavailable.

The 8th Wisconsin Volunteers are a source of endless stories. Previously, Jerry Allen has regaled us with the career of legendary eagle mascot Old Abe, and problematic commander Robert Murphy. On October 7, Allen presented the tangled lineage of John Wayles Jefferson, who would serve as Major, Lieutenant Colonel, and Colonel of the regiment.

The officer's lineage was unusual, because Jefferson was, in fact, part African American. And his surname (although he wasn't born with it) is integral to the story: Jefferson was, almost certainly, the grandson of Thomas Jefferson, by way of Sally Hemings.

Allen briefly summed up the general nature of slavery in America. He noted both the variance in situation for slaves (field hands having things the worst, then skilled craftsmen, and house slaves the best circumstances) and the frequency of "shadow families": children born of slave women via their

white masters. Such families often included a great deal of affection, but were rarely if ever public knowledge.

John Wayles Jefferson's story starts with one Betty Hemings, a half-black slave owned by John Wayles, a prominent Virginian. One of Wayles' white daughters, named Martha, eventually married Thomas Jefferson. Wayles himself wound up married three times, then after the death of his third wife he took Betty Hemings as his concubine. He and Betty had six children together, but (as usual) this "shadow family" was never publicly acknowledged, and they used their mother's surname. One of the six children was named Sally.

When John Wayles died in 1773, his heirs wanted to keep the Hemings family together, and sent them to live on Thomas Jefferson's Monticello plantation. Through John Wayles, Sally was the half-sister of Jefferson's wife Martha (who died in 1782), and thus also the aunt of Thomas' children – of whom just two of six, Martha and Maria, survived into adulthood. When Jefferson was sent to Paris by his fledgling country, his daughters – as well as Sally Hemings – eventually followed. While the Jeffersons were overseas, the French abolished slavery in 1789, and Sally was free as long as she lived there; but when Thomas returned to America, Sally returned home (and back to slavery) as well.

Ultimately, Sally would have six children, two of whom were sons Madison (named by Dolly Madison) and Eston. (Tellingly, Jefferson kept meticulous slave records at Monticello, including all births and the parents involved in each birth – but for Sally's six children, only the mother was recorded, not the

father.) Although the TJ-Sally “shadow family” was not public, within a year of Jefferson becoming President the relationship was made public by political enemies, albeit without proof. But the knowledge dogged Thomas for the rest of his career.

Thomas Jefferson freed Sally’s children in his will – the only slaves he freed. He also made special arrangements so that they could stay in Virginia (ordinarily, freed slaves had to move out of state at that time). Eston Hemings married a half-black woman named Julia Ann Isaacs. In 1835, his son John Wayles Hemings was born (named after his grandfather, John Wayles, aka TJ’s father-in-law.) The boy had grey eyes and red hair, as did our third President. The family then moved to Chillicothe, Ohio, where Eston Hemings became a well-known, and much sought after, musician. He let the Jefferson connection be known, and in a local school his daughter Anna was listed as a “grand daughter of Thomas Jefferson.”

(Sometime later, a Jefferson relative made the claim that Sally’s children were actually sired by a Jefferson cousin, Peter Carr, and this was generally accepted. In 1998, however, DNA testing ruled out Carr and definitively placed Sally’s family in the Jefferson male line. While not absolute proof that it was TJ himself, the evidence makes it exceedingly probable that Thomas was the father, as is widely accepted today.)

In 1851, the Fugitive Slave Law was strengthened. Even though the family was light enough to pass as white, Eston was concerned that his former slave status could put him in danger. In 1852 he moved the family to Madison, Wisconsin (much further from the slave frontier), passed the clan off as 100% white, and changed the family surname to – Jefferson! So now John Wayles Hemings was John Wayles Jefferson. As the nation spiraled towards Civil War, he became involved with the militia in Wisconsin, joining the Governor’s Guard in 1856 and becoming Major and aide-de-camp the following year. (Allen noted that some of the group’s training was led by none other than Elmer Ellsworth.)

Once the war came, John W. Jefferson served in the 8th Wisconsin, proceeding from Major to Lieutenant Colonel to, in 1864, Colonel. He saw action in most of its battles, receiving slight wounds at Corinth and Vicksburg. However, his rank as Colonel was ultimately revoked; in order to rate a colonel, a regiment had to be a certain size, and apparently Jefferson “padded” the regimental strength so he

would be eligible for the rank. Once this was discovered, he was under arrest for three months for the misrepresentation, before being reinstated. Postwar, Jefferson moved to Memphis and made a fortune in cotton trading. He never had children and died in 1892. His brother Beverly Jefferson also served, briefly, with the First Wisconsin in 1861. John’s uncle Madison (Eston’s brother) also had two sons who served, both in Ohio units. Madison Hemings eventually wrote a memoir which detailed the Jefferson lineage, but because the connection to Peter Carr was still believed at the time, Madison’s memoir was considered unreliable.

On behalf of the Round Table, I would like to thank Jerry Allen for this fascinating dive into the unusual John Wayles Jefferson.

Pat McCormick

Join Phil Angelo on Nov. 4, 2022, at 7 PM at the Nov. meeting of the NICWRT on ZOOM.

Phil Angelo is a retired newspaper editor. He has been affiliated with the Daily Journal in Kankakee, IL, for 34 years. He served as managing editor of the newspaper for 15 years and wrote the newspaper’s editorials for 20 Years, winning many state and regional awards.

Among his many interests are Sherlock Holmes, ballroom dancing, and Lionel trains. His interest in the Civil War started with the Centennial in the 1960’s and never stopped. Back when the late Bob Meagher was organizing Civil War tours, Phil took a series of tours covering Morgan’s great raid from start to finish. Morgan’s great raid through Kentucky, Indiana, and Ohio was overshadowed by Vicksburg and Gettysburg in the summer of 1863. But it was a sensation at the time. Wars are not pretty things, but if ever there was romance in the war, this was it.

Please join us for the next Saturday discussion on Saturday, November 19, 2022, at 10 AM. The topic will be the Atlanta Campaign. These are spirited discussions, and it is amazing what new is brought up at each session. Come join us.



2022-23 Officers and Trustee

Speaker lineup:

- Sept. 9: Laurie Schiller. The 29th USCT at the Crater
Oct. 7: Jerry Allen. 8th Wisconsin
Nov. 4: Phil Angelo. Morgan's Raid
Dec. 2: Dave Powell: Tullahoma
Jan. 6: Pat McCormick. North Anna
Feb. 3: Mary Abroe. Civil War Centennial, Rhetoric, Reality, and the Bounds Of Selective Memory
Mar. 3: Rob Girardi. TBA
April 7: Michael Wynne. The Real Story of The Rock Island POW Camp. This Program will be on ZOOM.
May 5: Wayne Rhine. The Kersage
June 2: Banquet. David Zarefsky. The Strategy of Lincoln's First Inaugural Address

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1 st Vice President	Wayne Rhine
2 nd Vice President	Vacant
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Treasurer	Pat McCormick
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Trustee	Tom Gavigan (2024)
Trustee	Fred Reczkowitz (2024)
Trustee	Danielle Kafka (2026)
Trustee	Vacant (2026) (Limberg)
Trustee	Alisa Corsi (2028)
Trustee	Vacant

Appointed Positions

Book Raffle	Vacant
Newsletter Editor	Jerry Rodosky gjrodosky@gmail.com

Upcoming Events

As a note the board has decided not to collect dues for the 2022-23 year.

You will notice on this mailing there are 5 PDF attachments. One is the Newsletter. Then there is a list of 99 books I have in my office. These are some of the books we are trying to get rid of. We are asking a small donation for a book, but it is getting critical that we get rid of them. There are more, but I have not cataloged them yet. If you have any interest, please contact me by email (gjrodosky@gmail.com). Please! The other 3 PDF's are about an upcoming tour sponsored by the Chicago chapter of the Round Table. We have been invited to join them. Details should be self evident.

The Zoom link for the Friday, 7 PM meeting is:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83292409507?pwd=cGV1UStlYU96R2IyRmVVTXZKZWVjvQT09>

Please email Laurie or Wayne if you are interested in volunteering for an open position. Also, please think membership! We need new people!