



# THE drum roll

Volume 38

362nd Regular Meeting  
Number 1

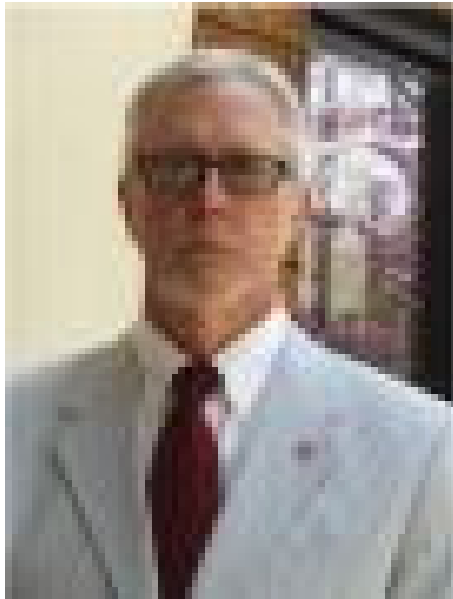
September 6, 2019

## *Crafting a memory of the Civil War*

Friday, September 6, 2019, 7:30 p.m.

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

### Longstreet, Lee, and the Lost Cause Myth



William Piston

**O**n September 6, William Piston will present Longstreet, Lee, and the Lost Cause Myth. He will explore the way in which former Confederate officers and postwar historians deified Robert E. Lee and vilified James Longstreet, crafting a memory of the Civil War

that reconciled white Southerners to defeat and made Lee a hero for generations of Americans.

William Garrett Piston is a native of Johnson City, Tennessee. He received B.A. and M.A. degrees from Vanderbilt University and a Ph.D. from the University of South Carolina. He retired in 2017 after teaching courses on the Civil War and American military history for 29 years at Missouri State University.

Piston is the author and co-author of numerous books and articles, including *Lee's Tarnished Lieutenant: James Longstreet and His Place in Southern History*, *Wilson's Creek: The Second Battle of the Civil War and the Men Who Fought It*, and *Portraits of Conflict: A Photographic History of Missouri in the Civil War*. He lives in Springfield, Missouri, with his wife Nancy.

If you would like to join us for dinner with William Piston at 5:30 p.m. before the meeting on September 6 at Sam's of Arlington restaurant, 1863 West Central Road, Arlington Heights, please contact Wayne Rhine at (847) 363-0875, waynerhine@gmail.com by Wednesday, September 4.

### September Saturday Discussion

All members and guests are invited to participate in the session to be held at Okeh Electric Co., 825 University Drive, Arlington Heights, on Saturday, September 21, from 10:00 a.m. until noon. Pat McCormick will lead the discussion on Northern Mississippi (Corinth, Brice's Crossroads, and Tupelo).

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.

**Dues payments for the 2019–2020 club year are due**

# An Evening with Louisa May Alcott

By Pat McCormick

On June 7, the Round Table's 2019 banquet was graced with the presence of Louisa May Alcott, as presented by Leslie Goddard.

Ms. Alcott first gave some brief details on her background. She was born in Pennsylvania but moved to Concord, Massachusetts early in life. She grew up in a well-to-do family; among her acquaintances were literary giants such as Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and Nathaniel Hawthorne. She described herself as somewhat of a tomboy – she loved the outdoors, and was forever walking, running, and climbing trees. She also like reading (in trees!), the books often borrowed from her father's close friend Emerson. Her love of the outdoors also led to interest in botany and bird-watching. Alcott also loved putting on theatricals, usually in the barn and often elaborate productions. She preferred darker roles -- villains, evil queens, and whatnot – and opined that her avoidance of ingénue-type roles may have played a part in her ultimate spinsterhood.

Given her unconventional background, when war broke out Alcott was determined to play a role. She eventually decided to become a nurse, joining up by meeting with the austere head of the Union nursing effort, Dorothea Dix. She described the requirements: applicants must be plain (which she cheerfully and self-deprecatingly admitted to), not under 30 years old (she did barely qualify), dress in brown or black – no ruffles, bows, hoops or jewelry. After joining up, she announced to her family, "I've enlisted!" She was

met at first with a stunned silence, then congratulations.

After using her family connections to see the governor of Massachusetts about free train passes, Alcott found herself at Union Hospital in the Washington, DC area. On her fourth day at the



*Louisa May Alcott*

job, the institution began receiving casualties from the December 1862 fiasco at Fredericksburg, Virginia. Needless to say, the situation was a shock to the new nurse, as 40 ambulances gradually arrived. Alcott mentioned that her first impression was the smell: "the vilest odors that ever assaulted the human nose." (She took to carrying lavender water with her, becoming known as the nurse with the bottle.) She noted the varying responses from patients in this then-unusual situation (a single woman nursing men) – patience, repose, embarrassment, humor. Typically, Alcott's first duty was cleaning up the newly-arrived wounded, then it was

time for feeding them – she thus became a waitress in addition to being a nurse, referring to herself as a "walking menu." She described the basic, uninspiring bill of fare, repeated for all three meals: Beef, pork, bread (which Alcott described as being made of "sawdust and water"), and strong coffee. After mealtime, the surgeons would come around, and she got lessons in dressing wounds – she related that the more complex the wound, the better for her education.

Soon Alcott saw duty as a night nurse. She would read letters to the men, stating that she "read their lives in the night," and sat with them when needed. (She described one patient named John, who suffered in "stoic agony.") She also

dictated letters for those unable to write, whether from wounds or illiteracy. But a Civil War hospital, despite best intentions and efforts, was hardly a pristine environment. After about six weeks, Alcott became ill herself, with typhoid fever. Eventually her father arrived to take her back home, where it took her many months to recover.

What to do next? Alcott related how she began to mine the letters she had written home while employed in nursing, turning them into stories which she then sold to a local newspaper. The writings were a hit, and the paper soon sold out. This caught the attention of publishers, who sought Alcott out to put her stories into book form. The result was "Hospital Sketches," published in 1863, which did well enough to be republished in 1869. Later, under a request from the publisher for something new, Alcott wrote what is far and away her best-known book, the classic novel "Little Women," which was based in large part on her own experiences while growing up in Concord. (The character of "Jo" was heavily based on Louisa herself.) The novel, published in 2 parts in 1868 and 1869, was an instant success. It remains one of the most well-regarded American novels of all time, and is still periodically reprinted in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Alcott continued writing, especially in children's literature. She summed up her career by noting that her six weeks of nursing led to her literary success.

### **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 September 7 the group will finish discussing the Perryville Campaign..

### **To Contribute to the Drum Roll**

All members are welcome to contribute to the newsletter. Appropriate subjects include book reviews, family histories, travel reports, and recent research. If you have information to share, please send it to Denise Limburg, 451 Woodview Road, Lake Barrington, IL 60010, (847) 212-5313, [dlimburg@prodigy.net](mailto:dlimburg@prodigy.net)

*drum roll*, September 2019

## **September Events**

**September 10, McHenry County Civil War Round Table.** Jerry Allen will speak on the Yankee Buz-zard Regiment: The Story of the 8th Wisconsin.

**September 13, Second Friday Lecture Series,** Civil War Museum, Kenosha, WI. Dan Nettesheim will speak on U.S. Grant's Corinth and Iuka Campaigns, noon. Free 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](http://www.thecivilwarmuseum.org).

**September 13, Chicago Civil War Round Table.** Janet Croon will speak on the War Outside My Window.

**September 14, Great Lakes Civil War Forum,** Civil War Museum, Kenosha, WI. Peter Carmichael will speak on the Fate of a Confederate Deserter after Gettysburg; Steve Acker on the Fight for the Sherfy Farm; and James Pula on the Defense of Culp's and Cemetery Hills; and Keith Rocco will discuss the scenes of the battle that he has painted. Registration begins at 8:30 a.m., program at 9:30 a.m.; \$60 (\$50 Friends of Museum), lunch included.

**September 17, Afternoon at the Movies,** Civil War Museum, Kenosha, WI. *The Red Badge of Courage* starring Audie Murphy will be shown, noon, free.

**September 20, Salt Creek Civil War Round Table.** Georgiann Baldino will speak on a Family and Nation Under Fire.

**September 27, Whoever Saw a Dead Cavalryman,** Civil War Museum, Kenosha, WI. Richard Zimmermann will discuss the Origins, Growing Pains and Eventual Maturation of Union Cavalry During the Civil War, noon.

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

The Civil War book club for women will meet at the home of Connie Rawa at 4 p.m. on Saturday, September 28, to discuss *All Things New* by Lynne Austin. This book highlights the lives of three women during Reconstruction in the South. If you are interested in joining the group, contact Denise Limburg at (847) 212-5313 or [dlimburg@prodigy.net](mailto:dlimburg@prodigy.net) or Mary Banks at (847) 497-3149 or [zeller1@comcast.net](mailto:zeller1@comcast.net).



## 2019–20 Officers and Trustees

President	Wayne Rhine
1st Vice President	Laurence Schiller
2nd Vice President	
Secretary	Bruce Allardice
Treasurer	Tom Defranco
Corresponding Sec.	Danielle Kafka
Membership	
Historian	Pat McCormick
Trustee	Denise Limburg
Trustee	Tom Gavigan
Trustee	Kathleen Lange
Trustee	Alisa Corsi
Trustee	Danielle Kafka
Trustee	Fred Reczkowicz

### Appointed Positions

Book Raffle	Charles Banks
Newsletter Editor	Denise Limburg

## June Silent Auction

The lucky winners at the June silent auction were Alfred Kitch, who won *U.S. Army: A Complete History* and *Civil War Trilogy* by Shelby Foote; Wayne Rhine, who won *Ellet's Brigade* by Chester G. Hearn; Phil Thornton, who won *Mosby's Rangers* by James J. Williamson and *Personal Memoirs of P. H. Sheridan* by Phil Sheridan; Pat McCormick, who won *Stand Firm and Fire Low* edited by Holden, Ross and Slomba; Mark W. Ostrand, who won *Sherman's March to the Sea* Medallion; Danielle Kafka, who won *Texas and New Mexico on the Eve of the Civil War* by Jerry Thompson and *The Paintings of Mort Kunstler – Gettysburg*; and Charlie Banks, who won Abe the War Eagle framed print.

Congratulations to the winners and sincere thanks to the donors.

## 2019-2010 Speakers

September 6	William Piston	Longstreet, Lee, and the Lost Cause Myth
October 4	Jerry Allen	8th Wisconsin Regiment
February 7	Wayne Rhine	Chicago Battery
April 10	Jack Hudson	Civil War Telegraphs



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