



THE drum roll

Volume 33

314th Regular Meeting
Number 3

November 7, 2014

Pride of the Fox River Valley

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

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

Saga of the 36th Illinois Infantry



Tom DeFranco

In August 1861, just over 1200 young men assembled on the banks of the Fox River in Aurora, Illinois. Recently enlisted, they soon formed the Fox Valley Regiment, also known as the 36th Illinois Infantry. These men were the pride of cities, towns, and hamlets all along the Fox River, but especially of the two sometimes rival cities of Elgin and Aurora, which collectively provided at least a third of their complement.

The 36th Illinois subsequently amassed one of the more remarkable combat records of the war — fighting in Missouri, Arkansas, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and Tennessee. They served under generals of great renown: Sherman, Rosecrans, Thomas, Sheridan, Lytle. In battle, the regiment suffered a total of 739 killed or wounded, of

which 204 died in action. A further 128 men were lost to disease. They were a fighting regiment, no doubt.

For me, the 36th Illinois has long been a favorite subject. They were the closest thing to a hometown unit, since part of one company hailed from Algonquin Township, my residence for the past thirty years. The regiment had its share of political turmoil, as early in the war competing factions from Elgin and Aurora each thought they should be in charge. The 36th also had two companies of mounted men, another oddity; eventually those companies became part of the 15th Illinois Cavalry and had their own unusual adventures. Their first colonel was a gruff old railroad man, Nicholas Gruesel. When another regimental commander, Silas Miller, was struck down in 1864, his funeral in Aurora was the largest held in that town to date.

Over the years I have collected copies of diaries, letters, and published memoirs from members of the 36th, even entertaining the idea of writing a regimental history. They do have an earlier regimental history, written in 1876, and it is a fine piece of work.

So naturally I am delighted to welcome one of our own members, Northern Illinois Civil War Round Table treasurer Tom DeFranco, Jr., who will speak to us about the 36th, centering on one of its most trying experiences of the war at the battle of Stones River. Fought between December 31, 1862, and January 2, 1863, Stones River (also known as Murfreesboro) pitted the Union Army of the Cumberland against the Confederate Army of Tennessee in a wintry contest for control of the area around Nashville.

Tom DeFranco has been a round table member for many years, is a past president, and has our

Please send dues payments to Tom DeFranco as soon as possible

heartfelt thanks for taking on the task of treasurer these past few years. A longtime war gamer and avid student of the war, he can more than hold his own in our lively Saturday discussions, as those who attend can attest.

If you would like to join us for dinner with Tom

DeFranco at Sam's of Arlington restaurant, 1863 West Central Road, Arlington Heights, at 5:30 p.m. before the meeting on November 7, please contact me at DPowell334@aol.com or (847) 343-2032 by Wednesday, November 5. —

Dave Powell

The Battle of Allatoona Pass

The Failed Start to a Disastrous Campaign

By Tom DeFranco

On Friday, October 10, 2014, Lee White, a park ranger from the Chickamauga-Chattanooga National Military Park presented to the Round Table the largely unsung story of the Battle of Allatoona Pass, fought about a month after Atlanta fell to Sherman's armies.

The fall of Atlanta brought problems and possibilities for both sides. No longer tied to the defense of Atlanta, Confederate General John Bell Hood was now free to turn back and harass Major General William T. Sherman's supply lines, particularly the Western and Atlantic Railroad. Sherman had already accounted for that possibility and naturally defended vital railroads at various points. Blockhouses and other fortifications protected the railroad at these locations.

One of the points selected to be attacked was Allatoona Pass. It must have seemed like a daunting task to the Confederates. The position included a very deeply cut passage protected on both sides by redoubts. Initially the pass was garrisoned by a demi-brigade under Colonel John Tourtelotte. He commanded the 93rd Illinois Infantry, the 18th Wisconsin, and his own 4th Minnesota regiments.

Hood assigned Major General Samuel French's division the task of attacking the supply base located at Allatoona Pass. French's division was part of his old corps, now commanded by General A. P. Stewart. Before French arrived, Brigadier General John Corse's division reinforced Tourtelotte's troops. Among the troops now manning the

Federal defenses was the 7th Illinois Infantry, armed entirely with Henry repeating rifles. They would play a significant role in the coming battle. In fact, White stated that the battle of Allatoona Pass was won by the Henry Rifle.

The battle occurred on October 5, 1864, almost exactly 150 years before our meeting. Confederate artillery opened up the proceedings with a 2-hour barrage, after which French sent a representative to demand that Corse and his men surrender. Corse never responded and French's men got tired of waiting and left.

French's division consisted of the brigades of Generals Claudius Sears, William Young, and Francis Cockrell. Cockrell commanded the fabled Missouri Tigers, who had previously seen action at Champion Hill. They were one of the best Confederate brigades of the Western Theater. French deployed his brigades with Sears attacking Corse's west redoubt from the north while Cockrell attacked the same redoubt from the west, supported in the rear by Young's brigade.

The Confederates, it should be noted, had a rare advantage of better than 3:2 in raw manpower at this battle. The artillery in the fort plus the advantage of the repeating rifles of the 7th Illinois made up for Confederate numbers. The Federals withstood a 2-hour infantry assault by French's division in a tense battle in which the western redoubt was reinforced by some of Tourtelotte's troops who had previously manned the eastern fort. At one point it seemed that the defenders must even-

tually give up. A report came to French, however, that a strong Yankee relief force was already on its way, influencing his decision to give up the attacks.

Sherman was reportedly concerned enough that he supposedly ordered Corse to “hold the fort.” In fact, it was 2 days before further Federal troops would arrive. In the larger picture, Hood was now convinced that his best option was to set off for

Tennessee and possibly Kentucky and the Ohio River. Sherman, in response, sent General George H. Thomas to Nashville to gather and train troops there for the coming fight for the Tennessee capital.

On behalf of the round table, I wish to thank Lee White for presenting the story of the unsung little fight that became the precursor of one of the greatest campaigns in military history.

Roster Changes

New recruits

Mr. James Spannagel
18 South Yale Avenue
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(847) 322-8207

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Mr. Dick Onnen
14 South Yale Avenue
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Mr. G. Walter “Bud” Ostrand
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Apartment 1224
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(847) 839-3512

e-mail gwalterostrand@gmail.com

Mr. William D. Powell
28 Garden Way
Schaumburg, Illinois 60194-3417
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Re-enlistment

Mr. Dave Corbett
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Buffalo Grove, Illinois 60089-4219
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November Events

November 11, Civil War Museum, Kenosha, WI.
Dr. Dan Monroe of Milliken University will speak on Slavery and the Constitution in Antebellum America, presented by Carthage College History

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Department and the Jack Miller Center, 7 p.m.; no charge. Information on all Civil War Museum programs is available at (262) 653-4140 or www.thecivilwarmuseum.org.

November 11, McHenry County Civil War Round Table. Charlie Banks will speak on Raids on the B&O Railroad.

November 13, Lake County Civil War Round Table. Shannon Mumm and her husband will present a program on the devastation that war cast on families throughout the South.

November 14, Civil War Museum, Kenosha, WI. Allen Bucholz will speak on the Ozaukee County Civil War Draft Riot of 1862 in Port Washington, Wisconsin, noon. Program sponsored by the Milwaukee Civil War Roundtable and the Iron Brigade Association.

November 14, Chicago Civil War Round Table. Steve Towne will speak on Civil War Espionage.

November 16, Civil War Museum, Kenosha, WI. Armistead-Bingham Lodge will present Freemasonry and the Civil War: Fraternal Brothers Across the Lines, 1:30 p.m.

November 21, Salt Creek Civil War Round Table. Jerry Allen will speak on Carter Van Vleck, Colonel 78th Illinois Infantry.

Book Discussion Group

The Civil War book discussion group led by Tom DeFranco at the Eisenhower Library, 4613 North Oketo Avenue (just south of Lawrence Avenue), Harwood Heights, meets on the first Saturday of the month from 10:00 until 11:30 a.m. On November 1 they will discuss Hood’s 1864 Tennessee campaign.



2014–15 Officers and Trustees

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Appointed Positions

Book Raffle	Charles Banks
Newsletter Editor	Sally Smith

Women's Civil War Book Club

The next book for the Civil War book club for women is *Widow of the South* by Robert Hicks. The group will meet to discuss the book at 4 p.m., December 14, 2014, at the Clayson House Museum, 224 East Palatine Road, Palatine. 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.

October Raffle

The October raffle winners were Jeff Johnson, who won *Men of Fire: Grant, Forrest, and the Campaign That Decided the Civil War* by Jack Hurtz; Fred Reczkowicz, who won *Lincoln at Cooper Union: The Speech That Made Abraham Lincoln President* by Harold Holzer; Thomas Postema, who won *The Siege of Petersburg: The Battles for the Weldon Railroad, August 1864* by John Horn; and Mary Banks, who won *Nothing but Victory: The Army of the Tennessee, 1861–1865* by Stephen E. Woodworth.

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

November 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, November 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 group will discuss the 1864 Tennessee campaign, led by second vice president Tom Postema.

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.

2014–2015 Speakers

November 7	Tom De Franco	36th Illinois Regiment
December 5	Pat McCormick	Red River Campaign.
January 9	Jerry Allen	Sioux Uprising of 1862
February 6	Bruce Allardice	Civil War Movies
March 6	Rob Girardi	Gouvernor K. Warren
April 3	Dr. Frank Varney	General Grant and the Re-writing of History.
May 1	Eric Wittenberg	John Buford at Gettysburg
June 5	Chris Kolakowski	The Naval War in 1864

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