



THE drum roll

Volume 33

312th Regular Meeting

Number 1

September 5, 2014

Expedition aimed at Confederate supply base

Friday, September 5, 2014, 7:30 p.m.

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

Valley Thunder The Battle of New Market, 1864



Charles Knight

The Battle of New Market, Virginia, fought on May 15, 1864, marked a new year of campaigning in a much contested region: the Shenandoah Valley. The Valley was the burying ground of many previous Federal reputations; in the spring of 1864, nothing much seemed to have changed. Union Major General Franz Sigel, a former German revolutionary who emigrated to the United States after the failed uprisings of 1848, was 1864's victim.

Sigel had been assigned to the Valley department only a few months earlier. Another new man arrived in Virginia that spring. Ulysses S. Grant was now commander of all the Union armies, and his agenda included simultaneous advances from

Union forces large and small in both Virginia and the war's other theaters. Sigel would command one of those expeditions.

Sigel was no military man's first choice, having proved troublesome in previous commands. Grant and Henry Halleck — now the Union's second-ranked commander — would have preferred a West Pointer in the Valley. But Sigel was a political figure and rallied German-American votes during an election year; President Abraham Lincoln needed him. That meant that Grant needed him too. "If a man can't skin he must hold a leg while someone else does," said Lincoln, describing Grant's plans.

Thus it was that in early May, Franz Sigel led a force of roughly 7,000 men south from Winchester, Virginia, an expedition aimed at the Confederate supply base of Stanton. Another Union column under General George D. Crook was to strike from West Virginia, intending to meet up with Sigel. Unfortunately for the German, Crook's column never arrived.

Opposing Sigel was former vice president, now turned Confederate general, John C. Breckinridge. It was Breckinridge's unenviable task to organize a defense of the Valley out of the limited forces available. With Grant ready to march on Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia, no southern reinforcements would be headed Breckinridge's way. As a result, everyone would get a chance to fight, including home guards and the cadets of the Virginia Military Institute. Breckinridge met Sigel at New Market on May 15 with a force of about 5,000 troops, including the cadets.

The Northern Illinois Civil War Round Table is pleased to welcome Charles Knight, author of the widely acclaimed recent title on this battle: *Valley Thunder* (Savas-Beatie, 2010). Charlie is a public

Please note change of location for 2014–2015 meetings

history professional, having recently taken the helm of the Arizona Capital Museum. Before that he worked at the New Market Battlefield State Historic Site and at the Douglas McArthur Memorial in Virginia. He lives in Phoenix with his wife and family.

If you would like to join us for dinner at 5:30 p.m. before the meeting on September 5 at Sam's of Arlington restaurant, 1863 West Central Road, Arlington Heights, please contact me at DPowell334@aol.com or (847) 343-2032 by Wednesday, September 3. — *Dave Powell*

Corinth and the Civil War

By Tom DeFranco

On Friday, June 6, Dr. Tim Smith presented to the Northern Illinois Civil War Round Table the case of the importance of the city of Corinth, Mississippi, in the American Civil War. Both sides saw it very early in the war and made plans that included the rail hub of northern Mississippi.

Historians have placed much emphasis on the Battle of Shiloh as the crux of the spring campaigning and fighting, but the target for both armies all along was Corinth, Mississippi — the South looking to hold on to what was likely the most crucial rail hub and the Northerners looking to seize it.

Whichever side that held the northern Mississippi town would have an advantage early on. It was not the be-all and end-all of strategic places in the South, but it was high on the list. It represented a first step toward putting an end to the South's ability to supply its eastern army with provisions.

The concentration of the western armies resembled an hourglass in lower Tennessee and upper Mississippi and revealed the goals of both sides early on. The banks of the Tennessee River near Pittsburg Landing may have been where the armies eventually fought for early control of Corinth, but Corinth itself was the objective. In fact, both sides expected the big battle to be fought at

Corinth, and it likely would have been had the South not launched what was basically a preemptive strike against what they thought might be unsuspecting Yankees at Shiloh Church.

To an extent the Yankees were unsuspecting, more so the high command than the rank and file. They

convinced themselves that the Southerners would sit and wait and prepare to defend Corinth rather than have the audacity to attack the mighty Union host. How wrong they were! So, ignoring some of the facts above is what leads some to discount Corinth as an early war objective of both sides.



Railroad depot and Tishomingo Hotel, summer 1862, Corinth, Mississippi.
The United States Army Heritage and Education Center

Smith also reminded us that General Henry W. Halleck's seemingly slow pace to Corinth from Pittsburg Landing is often misinterpreted by those who study the Federal efforts to seize the town. Contrary to popular belief, Halleck did not move a mile a day and dig in. He intended to march at a faster pace but conditions did not allow for it. In fact, early in the journey southward he moved at a faster pace. Once he got there, at least the Federals didn't have to fight for the town. The Rebels under General P. G. T. Beauregard abandoned it along with the fortifications they had built.

There would eventually be a fight there during the general Confederate offensive of the autumn of 1862, but the Confederates would have to fight to get it back, and fight they did, but they would fail at recapturing the railroad crossroads town. They left the Federals with the advantage of defending a fortified town.

On behalf of the Northern Illinois Civil War Round Table, I'd like to thank Dr. Tim Smith for helping to close out the round table season and for getting us to reconsider the Corinth campaign of 1862.

September Events

September 9, McHenry County Civil War Round Table. Frank Crawford will speak on the Baltimore riots.

September 11, Lake County Civil War Round Table. Frank Crawford will speak on new ways to study the Civil War.

September 12, Civil War Museum, Kenosha, WI. Frank Crawford will speak on the story of Illinois soldier Jennie Hodgers, noon. Information on all Civil War Museum programs is available at (262) 653-4140 or www.thecivilwarmuseum.org.

September 12, Chicago Civil War Round Table. Frank Varney will speak on General Grant's Memoirs.

September 13, 7th Annual Civil War Forum, Civil War Museum, Kenosha, WI. James Cornelius, Steve Acker, Gregg Biggs, and John Lundstrom will cover topics from 1864, 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., \$60, \$50 Friends of the Museum.

September 17, Civil War Museum, Kenosha, WI. Dr. Jason Jividen will speak on the attempt of progressive and modern liberal U.S. presidents to appropriate the Lincoln image into their political rhetoric, 7 p.m., sponsored by Carthage College and the Jack Miller Center.

September 20, Civil War Museum, Kenosha, WI. Family-friendly re-enactors as Civil War soldiers will answer questions about gear, food, reasons for volunteering, and battles, and what it took to be a Civil War Soldier, noon to 4 p.m., sponsored by the Kenosha Garden Railroad Society.

September 19, Salt Creek Civil War Round Table. Bruce Allardice will speak on 10 Worst Generals.

September 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, September 20, 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 Overland 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.

Roster Change

New recruit

Ms. Carol Bernsten
323 South Bothwell Street
Palatine, Illinois 60067-6857
(847) 358-2856

Dues Are Due

Dues forms and checks should be sent to treasurer Tom DeFranco, 4844 North Ridgewood Avenue, Norridge, Illinois 60706-2941, as soon as possible. Dues for the 2014-15 year are \$55 family, \$45 individual, and \$5 student. A sustaining membership is defined by any payment over and above the normal rates. Deduct \$5 if you receive the newsletter by e-mail.



2014–15 Officers and Trustees

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Appointed Positions

Book Raffle	Charles Banks
Newsletter Editor	Sally Smith

June Raffle

The June raffle winners of framed photographs by Kathleen Lange were Pat McCormick, who won the Illinois Monument at Vicksburg, and Alisa Corsi, who won the Chickamauga Battlefield.

In the silent auction Fred Kitch took home *Master of War: The Life of General George H. Thomas* by Benson Bobrick; Mark Ostrand, *Days of Defiance: Sumter, Secession, and the Coming of the Civil War* by Maury Klein; Phil Thornton, *Campfire & Battlefield* by various authors, *Sherman: Merchant of Terror, Advocate of Peace* by Charles Edmund Vetter, and *No Better Place To Die: The Battle of Stones River* by Peter Cozzens; Tom DeFranco, *The Vicksburg Campaign* (three volumes) by Edwin C. Bearss; and Charlie Banks, the set of bookends.

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

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 September 6 they will begin the new season by discussing Civil War figures from either a book or magazine article.

To Contribute to the Drum Roll

All members are welcome to contribute items to the newsletter. Appropriate subjects include book reviews, family histories, travel reports, and recent research. Articles should be whatever length is necessary to cover the subject. If you have information to share, please send it to Sally Smith, 328 Eastern Avenue, Barrington, Illinois 60010; (847) 381-6486; or e-mail drum_roll4@juno.com.

2014–2015 Speakers

September 5	Charlie Knight	Battle of New Market, Virginia
October 3	Lee White	Battle of Allatoona Pass
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	Gouverneur K. Warren
April 3	Dr. Frank Varney	General Grant and the Re-writing of History.

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