



# THE drum roll

Volume 31

292nd Regular Meeting

Number 1

September 7, 2012

## *The Breadbasket of the Confederacy*

Friday, September 7, 2012, 7:30 p.m.

Arlington Heights Memorial Library  
500 North Dunton Avenue, Arlington Heights, Illinois

### The Importance of the Shenandoah Valley to the Confederacy

**T**he Shenandoah Valley stretches 140 miles between the Allegheny Mountains and the Blue Ridge Mountains in western Virginia. It is 25 miles wide at its widest and runs from southwest to northeast, terminating at Harpers Ferry on the Virginia and Maryland border, only 60 miles from the Federal capital. Screened by mountains to the east and west, it provided the Confederacy with a convenient invasion route.

In 1862, General Stonewall Jackson used the valley to threaten Washington, DC, and with a small army tied up 60,000 Federal troops that otherwise might have been used to reinforce General George McClellan in his campaign to take Richmond by way of the Virginia Peninsula.

In 1864, General Robert E. Lee sent General Jubal Early to halt a Union incursion into the Valley and subsequently to attempt a campaign similar to Jackson's in order to threaten Washington and relieve the pressure of the Union siege of Petersburg/Richmond.

Along with its strategic and tactical military advantages, the Shenandoah Valley was of great logistical value to the Confederacy. It has been described as the Breadbasket of the Confederacy. The Valley was an extremely fertile and highly

productive agricultural region. Farmers in the Valley practiced a mixed agriculture that produced a broad array of field crops, including corn, hay, and cereal crops, particularly wheat.

They kept a full complement of livestock such as horses, cattle, sheep, swine and fowl. The Confederate Army relied heavily on the valley as a source of draft horses.

The logistical value of the Shenandoah Valley is evidenced by General U. S. Grant's orders in late 1864 to Generals Phil Sheridan and David Hunter to destroy all provisions and livestock in the Valley not needed for their soldiers' subsistence. The result was ever after known in Virginia as the "Burning." Pre-war agricultural production in the Valley was not achieved again until 1880.

On Friday, September 7, 2012, Frank Crawford will discuss the importance of the Shenandoah Valley to the Southern Confederacy. Crawford graduated with a degree in American literature and drama from Rockford College. He has a master's degree in history from Northern Illinois University. He is a life member and past president of the Northern Illinois Civil War Round Table as well as a member of the McHenry County and Lake County Civil War Round Tables in Illinois and the Manasota and Sun Coast Civil War Round Tables in Florida.

A retired special education teacher, he has been published in *Civil War Times Illustrated*, *Amer-*



Frank Crawford

**Please send dues payments to Tom DeFranco as soon as possible**

*ica's Civil War*, and other Civil War periodicals. He edited the letters of Samuel Pepper of the 95th Illinois Infantry and wrote *Proud to Say I am a Union Soldier*. He is working on two more books, *In Lincoln's Shadow* and *In the Shadows of History*.

All who would like to join us for dinner at 5:30 p.m. on September 7 at Sam's of Arlington restaurant, 1863 West Central Road, Arlington Heights, please notify me at [gaviganthomas@comcast.net](mailto:gaviganthomas@comcast.net) or (847) 985-1466 no later than Wednesday, September 5. — *Tom Gavigan*

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## A Confederate Enigma

By Tom DeFranco

**A**nother fine banquet for the Northern Illinois Civil War Round Table is in the books. We were entertained and enlightened by Dr. Craig Symonds as he filled us in and perhaps changed a few minds about the Civil War career of General Joseph Eggleston Johnston.

Johnston is often maligned for a lack of aggressiveness on the field and thus often compared to his adversary in the spring of 1862, General George McClellan. Yet there were occasional mitigating factors. For instance, during the Peninsula Campaign, Johnston was pressured by President Jefferson Davis to go on the offensive against McClellan. The problem was that he had approximately 55,000 troops to McClellan's 100,000. Davis refused Johnston any more men to fill his ranks. After that fiasco there was Seven Pines, which saw Johnston wounded and out of action for months, and General Robert E. Lee took over the Eastern Confederate army. After Lee took over, Davis found a way to reinforce that army to near parity with McClellan's Army of the Potomac.

The tension between Davis and Johnston became apparent as early as the First Manassas Campaign. Johnston was supposed to hold Harpers Ferry and prevent any Federal efforts to move on Richmond through the Shenandoah Valley. Johnston chose to give up the idea of holding it though. He probably already felt slighted upon receiving his full generalship during the formation of the Confederate army. When he left Federal

service, he was the highest ranking officer therein. Although he was one of the first five men to achieve the honor of full generalship (along with Robert E. Lee, Samuel Cooper, Albert S. Johnston, and P. G. T. Beauregard), certain others, including Lee, received the honor ahead of Joseph Johnston.



*Joseph E. Johnston*

President Davis likely did Joe Johnston no favors by placing him in command of Confederate forces between the Appalachians and the Mississippi River. Not only did his department contain two of the most dissension-ridden armies of all the Confederate forces, but Davis interfered with Johnston's ideas.

The first item at hand was the transfer of Carter Stevenson's large division from General Braxton Bragg's army to General John Pemberton's. As it was, at the time of transfer these troops would have been much more useful to Bragg than they were to Pemberton, as they were moved just before Bragg's attack against General William S. Rosecrans at Murfreesboro, TN. Conditions in the field and relations between the president and the general deteriorated even further as General Ulysses S. Grant closed in on Vicksburg. Davis saw value in holding Vicksburg; Johnston saw it as a trap.

If the two men possibly shared a character trait of having thin skins and fragile egos, they parted company on the military philosophy of holding ground at all costs. Johnston, the general, saw greater value in keeping the army intact and in the field than in holding territory. Davis, the presi-

dent, had political concerns that favored making a concerted effort to hold the river city. This difference put Pemberton in the middle of a series of conflicting orders from his military boss and his president.

In fact, upon reaching Jackson, Johnston assessed the situation almost immediately. "I am too late," he said. Johnston probably had the better argument, but after losing Jackson (without much of a fight), he didn't help his cause by retreating northeastward (away from Pemberton's army advancing eastward, trying to follow Johnston's advice). In fairness, he was likely troubled by the possibility of encountering General William T. Sherman's 15th Corps if he headed northwest.

December of 1863 saw the firing of Braxton Bragg and the assignment of Joe Johnston to command the Army of Tennessee. His job would be to keep the Yankees out of Atlanta. He would not get the reinforcements to accomplish this task that Robert E. Lee would get in Virginia. Add to this the fact that Lee knew Virginia better than Johnston knew Georgia and that Sherman, McPherson, and Thomas were able to pass through mountain

gaps that Johnston simply didn't have the manpower to defend. These Fabian tactics did not sit well with Davis (who was further convinced by Hood's letter-writing campaign), and Johnston was relieved again by the President.

The final months of the war saw a forlorn effort by Davis to hold the Carolinas and prevent the link-up of Sherman's and Grant's forces. Robert E. Lee urged him to re-install Johnston to command the remnants of the Army of Tennessee. The major problem was that the army was scattered over three states. Generals under Johnston's command included D. H. Hill, William Hardee, Joe Wheeler, and Wade Hampton. In all, Johnston commanded some 25,000 troops, on paper. When he finally managed to concentrate his forces, Johnston bloodied up one of Sherman's columns at Bentonville, NC, but it was not to last. Sherman concentrated his columns to counterattack Johnston. But the man often chastised for his Fabian tactics had become the attacker.

On behalf of the Northern Illinois Civil War Round Table, I wish to thank Dr. Craig Symonds for his presentation on a true Confederate enigma.

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## September Events

**September 8, Civil War Museum, Kenosha, WI.** Fifth Annual Great Lakes Civil War Forum will focus on the Battle of Antietam from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Cost is \$60, members \$50. Information on all Civil War Museum programs is available at (262) 653-4140 or [www.thecivilwarmuseum.org](http://www.thecivilwarmuseum.org).

**September 8, Eisenhower Library, Harwood Heights.** Civil War book discussion group led by Tom DeFranco will discuss *Landscape Turned Red* by Stephen Sears at 10 a.m. The library is located at 4613 North Oketo Avenue, just south of Lawrence Avenue.

**September 11, McHenry County Civil War Round Table.** Meeting will be devoted to Show and Tell. Signup is required.

**September 14, Civil War Museum, Kenosha, WI.** Frank Crawford will present A Defense of Burnside at the Bridge at noon.

**September 14, Chicago Civil War Round Table.** Tom Schwartz will give the Nevins-Freeman Ad-

dress, A People's Contest: Lincoln, Soldiers, and the Dilemmas of Democracy.

**September 16, Oak Lawn Library.** The Battlefield Balladeers will sing songs of the Civil War, accompanied by a variety of instruments, at 2 p.m. Information is available at [www.lib.oak-lawn.il.us](http://www.lib.oak-lawn.il.us) or (708) 422-4990.

**September 21, Salt Creek Civil War Round Table.** Richard Crowe will speak on Lincoln's Assassination: The Stanton Connection.

**September 29, Civil War Museum, Kenosha, WI.** Dr. James McPherson will discuss and sign his new book, *War on the Waters: The Union and Confederate Navies*, noon. Free tickets will be available that day at the front desk after 9:00 a.m.

**September 29, Civil War Museum, Kenosha, WI.** Keith Rocco will speak on Capturing the Past: The Creative Process, at 2:30 p.m. A new exhibit, Capturing the Past: The Civil War Art of Keith Rocco, will open that same day.



## 2012–2013 Officers and Trustees

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## 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 2012–2013 year are \$55 family, \$45 individual, and \$5 student. A sustaining membership is defined by any payment over and above the normal rates.

## 2012–2013 Speakers

September 7	Frank Crawford	The Shenandoah Valley
October 5	Leslie Goddard	Mary Chesnut
November 2	William Furry	To be announced
December 7	Father Robert Miller	Lincoln's Faith
January 4	Tom DeFranco	The Pipe Creek Plan and Its Effect on the Battle at Gettysburg
February 1	Bruce Allardice	Chicago in the Civil War
March 1	Rob Girardi	To be announced
April 5	Tom Clemens	Antietam (tentative)
May 3	Gloria Swift	To be announced
June 7	George Buss and Tim Connor	Lincoln–Douglas (tentative)

## June Raffle

The June raffle winners were Pat McCormick, who won the print of the Illinois Monument at Vicksburg, donated by Terry Winschel; and Dave Powell, who won the set of three original Gettysburg sketches by Dale Gallon, donated by Jim Otis.

Congratulations to the winners and sincere thanks to the donors. If you would like to donate Civil War–related books or items, please contact Charlie Banks.

## September Saturday Discussion

All members and guests are invited to participate in the session to be held in the Zimmerman Room at the Barrington Area Library, 505 North Northwest Highway, Barrington, on September 15, 2012, from 10:00 a.m. until noon. The discussion will cover Antietam and the Maryland Campaign of 1862. The discussion will be led by second vice president Dave Powell.

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.

To learn more about this Round Table call Sully Sullivan at (847) 259-5577  
or visit our website at [www.northernilcwrt.org](http://www.northernilcwrt.org)