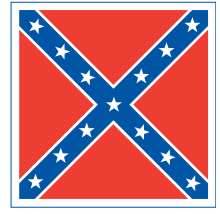


THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

Founded December 3, 1940



Volume LXXIV, Number 9

Chicago, Illinois

May 2014



731st REGULAR MEETING

★★★★★

Friday, May 9

★★★★★

HOLIDAY INN MART PLAZA

350 NORTH ORLEANS STREET

Cocktails at 5:30 p.m.

Dinner at 6:30 p.m.

\$47 - Members/Non-members

Entrée:

Chicken Cassriel,

Baked Orange

Roughy,

Vegetarian Plate

or Fruit Plate

Please Note:

Make your reservations by Wednesday, May 7, by emailing dinnerreservations@chicagocwrt.org, or calling 630 460-1865 with the names of your party and choice of entrée.

If a cancellation becomes necessary after dinner reservations have been made, please email us at dinnerreservations@chicagocwrt.org and/or call us at 630-460-1865.

We are offering the option of choosing not to have dinner and coming only for the address at 7:15 p.m., for a charge of \$10 per person.

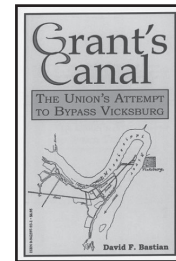
Parking at the Holiday Inn is \$12 with a validated parking sticker.

David Bastian on Grant's Canal

BY BRUCE ALLARDICE

For centuries the Mississippi River had functioned as “the Father of the Waters” (as Abraham Lincoln so aptly put it), allowing the Middle West to ship and receive goods with the South and with the world. On the lower Mississippi, Vicksburg was (again, as Lincoln put it) the “key.” Situated on a high bluff overlooking a bend in the river, with rail connections to the rest of the Confederacy, Vicksburg’s importance as a supply hub was only exceeded by the ability of cannon placed on those bluffs to block northern steamboats from using the river.

On May 9th Dave Bastian, the author of Grant’s Canal; the Union’s Attempt to Bypass Vicksburg, will talk about the two Union campaigns against Vicksburg. The talk focuses on the efforts to divert the Mississippi River away from Vicksburg by digging a canal across the narrow bend opposite the town. Had the Union succeeded, they would have had immediate and complete control of the river (definitely in the summer of 1862 and possibly in the winter of 1863). The presentation explores Vicksburg’s geographical importance and the topographical characteristics that made it so defensible.



Most books are a new twist on a battle, campaign or leader. His book and presentation is about a totally new topic; one that historians have really not understood to date. As a civil engineer who lived in Vicksburg, he understands the river and how close the Union came in succeeding. Had they succeeded, Vicksburg would no longer have been an important target. This was an engineering project - diverting the

Mighty Mississippi!
- an engineering solution to a military problem.

Dave has a degree in civil engineering from Georgia Tech and a masters from

Delft University in the Netherlands. He was a delegate to the tri-national Commission for the Study of Alternatives to the Panama Canal that produced the feasibility study for the Canal’s current enlargement. More recently he worked on the post-Katrina levee rebuild in New Orleans and co-authored a book that comes out in May, New Orleans, Hurricanes from the Start. He has given presentations to over 80 CWRTs



New Market's Long Tradition of Reenactments

BY TROY D. MARSHALL

(April 2014 Civil War News)

Staunton, Va. – May 10, 1864
Maj. Gen. F. H. Smith, Supt. VMI:

Sigel is moving up the Valley – was at Strasburg last night. I cannot tell you whether this is his destination. I would be glad to have your assistance at once with the cadets and the section of artillery. Bring all the forage and rations you can . . .

Yours respectfully,
John C. Breckinridge
Major General

With these few words the Virginia Military Institute and the Battle of New Market are irrevocably linked.

That spring of 1864 the stakes were much higher than they had ever been and so were the expectations; not like previous years when the classroom monotony was occasionally broken up by an up-country march after Union cavalry. But still youthful bravado reigned supreme at VMI and all saw the barracks as their prison.

Maj. Gen. John Breckinridge required their battalion to bolster his under-strength force of about 5,000 men. His opponent, Maj. Gen. Franz Sigel, and his seemingly limitless force of almost 9,000 men was heading south up the valley.

The cadets joined Breckinridge's army in Staunton and were greeted with several dances by the well-wishers. Cadets danced on tired and blistered feet, little thinking that combat was only three days hence.

On the morning of May 15, 1864, Col. Scott Shipp's battalion of cadets lumbered groggily towards the small hamlet of New Market. Here they waited an eternity until the sun was high overhead as they advanced against Union troops after 11 a.m.

Though undoubtedly some of the best drilled troops on the field, most were not combat veterans at all and the average age among them was only 18 years. The youngest cadet was barely 15 years old.

After 3 p.m. the battalion moved forward to Sigel's main line on Bushong's Hill. They wrestled a cannon away from Capt. Albert von Kleiser's Battery B, 30th New York, after brief but decisive close-quarter combat.

By end of the day the cadet battalion had suffered 47 wounded out of 257, with five dying and five more succumbing to their wounds later.

New Market's battle was not large compared to Gettysburg or Shiloh, but nonetheless it was important and inspirational.

Virginia scholar Douglas Southall Freeman wrote: "Seldom did a small victory have so large an effect. Had not Sigel been driven back when he was, the Valley of Virginia might have been occupied by the Federals before the wheat crop was harvested.... Short as was the time saved by the Battle of New Market, it was invaluable."...

Commemorations

On May 15, 1914, VMI, Virginia and the nation commemorated the battle's 50th anniversary with a day-long slate of events at New Market and VMI's first reenactment of the battle.

According to the May 21, 1914, edition of the Shenandoah Valley newspaper the crowd variously estimated at from 6,000 to 8,000 people "came from all parts of the country – on the trains, in vehicles, on foot, horseback, and in automobiles"

On Sept. 20, 1923, Brig.-Gen Smedley Butler brought 3,500 United States Marines to New Market for the first modern reenactment on the battlefield.

The Marines stood in for General Sigel's Union troops and the VMI Cadets reprised the role of their 1864 forbearers. According to a souvenir postcard the crowds were estimated at over 100,000.

The first official reenactment in 1968 started the annual tradition which has continued to the present day.

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Founded December 3, 1940
1039 Hinswood
Darien, Illinois 60561
Phone: 630-460-1865
www.chicagocwrt.org

The only requirement for membership in The Civil War Round Table is a genuine interest in the Civil War and its era. For information, address Membership Committee, 1039 Hinswood, Darien, Illinois 60561, or editor@chicagocwrt.org.

As the 150th anniversary of the Battle of New Market approaches, VMI and its New Market Battlefield State Historical Park are well poised to tell their important story to a new generation of cadets, history enthusiasts, participants and spectators.

The park will begin the commemoration by offering a 150th anniversary guided tour of the battlefield from 1-3 p.m. on Thursday, May 15. The reenactment will run from Friday through Sunday.

Each day will offer speakers, including author Jeff Shaara, demonstrations and a battle reenactment following the historical action on that particular day. The Virginia Civil War 150 HistoryMobile will be on site over the weekend.

For more information call 866-515-1854 or visit www.vmi.edu/newmarket.

Maj. Troy D. Marshall is Site Director of the Virginia Museum of the Civil War

Reminder—Bears Fund

Our annual appeal for the Bears Fund is underway. The CWRT asks for donations so that we can, during our annual battlefield tour, give Ed a check for the battlefield preservation effort of Ed's choice. Donees will get their names published in the newsletter.

April Meeting

BY MARK MATRANGA

Scott Bowden presented “*Last Chance for Victory: Robert E. Lee and the Gettysburg Campaign*” to The Civil War Round Table at its 730th regular meeting on April 11, 2014. Bowden’s Lee is the ‘handsome *beau ideal* of a soldier’ who rose to prominence in the anti-bellum army, a man whose ‘sense of superiority and fitness to command were undeniable.’ It was said of Lee that “no man could stand in his presence and not recognize his capacity and acknowledge his moral force.”

Bowden maintains that Jefferson Davis did not favor Lee with a major command at the outbreak of war because he was a protégé of Winfield Scott who Davis resented for Scott’s treatment of his former father in law, Zachary Taylor. But with Joe Johnston’s wounding Lee came to command - of an undisciplined army lacking morale with a federal army five miles from Richmond. Lee commenced the Seven Days with one of his signature turning movements, forcing the opposition to turn and compromise its position. This removed the federal threat to the confederate capitol in July 1862.

Lee moved next on the John Pope’s Army of Virginia, a turning movement into its rear and lines of communication. This led to Second Manassas, following which Lee executed an even larger turning movement into Maryland. He detached Jackson and concentrated his ill-equipped army in western Maryland awaiting the reduction of Harper’s Ferry. When his plan fell into McClellan’s hands, he was compelled

to retreat or stand and fight which he audaciously chose to do.

After Antietam, Lee was able to mold the army to optimize its fighting capabilities. In December 1862, it repulsed the Federals at Fredericksburg, but the type of victory Lee sought eluded him. With part of his army sent away due to a lack of supplies, Lee divided his reduced army in May 1863, holding with a smaller force and sending Jackson on his flank march. Chancellorsville put Lee in the pantheon of ‘great’ captains.

The army was reorganized into three corps with two new corps commanders after Jackson’s death. Lee took this army north in the wake of Chancellorsville in another wide turning maneuver. He left part of the army on the Rappahannock and stealing a march on the federals, with the goal of forcing battle in Pennsylvania.

Despite losing communication with Jeb Stuart during the march north, Lee became aware of the union army’s pursuit and concentrated. When the armies met at Gettysburg on July 1st, the confederates were presented with a significant opportunity. After the federals retreated to the heights south of town, Lee sent instructions “to press those people” to take the federal position, “if practicable.” Bowden does not consider those orders discretionary, but Ewell did not attack. The federals then solidified the Cemetery Hill and Ridge positions.

Lee determined to maintain the initiative on July 2nd when the plan

was to roll up the union right with an echelon attack. But with Sickles’ move into the Peach Orchard salient, Hood argued for a move further to the south. Longstreet denied this request as time would not permit it. The attack pressed forward, with the crucial fighting taking place in the center of the federal line where McLaws’ division breached the Peach Orchard line and Wilcox reached the base of Cemetery Ridge. But the attack lost momentum by the time it reached Wright’s brigade; Posey lost control of his brigade, Mahone did not attack, and Pender was mortally wounded. A half-hearted attack on Culp’s Hill receded.

On July 3rd, the plan to attack early at the federal center did not materialize. Lee then assembled artillery to support a revised assault. Second Corps batteries on the oblique were key to the bombardment but General Pendleton “woefully failed” this part of the mission. The brigades of Pickett, Pettigrew and Trimble, parts of which started off a mile from the federal line, pushed into the teeth of federal artillery. The famed “charge” resulted in a bloody repulse. Recognizing his failure not to have organized the attack, Lee offered to resign.

The Pennsylvania gambit was Lee’s last realistic chance to achieve victory. Bowden admires Lee, and makes the case for his being a great commander. We must invite Scott back to discuss his provocative comments regarding the operational versus tactical abilities of Generals Longstreet and Jackson.

GRAPESHOT



The CWRT will hold its **annual election** of officers at the June meeting. The nominating committee slate will be announced, and nominations from the floor are accepted.

On May 17th-18th, Naper Settlement will host its annual "Civil War Days." The two day event features re-enactments and presentations, including our own **Leslie Goddard** portraying Civil War nurse Clara Barton

At **Fischer Farm**, Bensenville on May 31st, Brian Flora, of Oak Park, will present a fascinating look at the Grand Army of the Republic and its impact on post-Civil War America. The event starts at 1:00 p.m.

Starting May 6th, the Illinois State Museum in Lockport will host an Exhibition on **Civil War Era Quilts**. This exhibition was formerly on display at the Illinois State Museum in Springfield.

Check the **Announcements** section of the CWRT's website for additional coming events.

Know of any upcoming talks, events, or publications? All members are welcome to contribute items to the newsletter. Contact the editor at editor@chicagocwrt.org or (630) 297-8046.

SCHIMMELFENNIG BOUTIQUE

Sixty plus years of audio recordings of CWRT lectures by distinguished historians are available and can be purchased in CD format. For pricing and a lecture list, please contact Hal Ardell at hal229@ameritech.net or phone him at (773) 774-6781.

Each meeting features a book raffle, with proceeds going to battlefield preservation. There is also a silent auction for books donated by Ralph Newman and others, again with proceeds benefiting battlefield preservation.

More Upcoming Civil War Events

- May 2nd, Northern Illinois CWRT: Betty Kay on "Three Illinois Women During the Civil War"
- May 2nd-4th, Itasca: National Society of Civil War Surgeon's Conference
- May 6th-9th, Midway Village in Rockford: Civil War Days
- May 8th, Lake County CWRT: Jeff Johnson on "The 8th Illinois Cavalry"
- May 8th, Milwaukee CWRT: Dave Bastian on "Grant's Canal"
- May 13th, McHenry County CWRT: **Jerry Allen** on "Carter Van Vleck, Colonel of the 78th Illinois"
- May 14th, Flossmoor Community Church: **Leslie Goddard** on "Civil War Quilts"
- May 16th, Salt Creek CWRT: David Keller on "Camp Douglas"
- May 20th, Lincoln-Davis CWRT: Eric Jacobsen on "The Battle of Franklin"
- May 21st, Starved Rock CWRT of Ottawa: Steve Dancy on "Custer"
- May 22nd, South Suburban CWRT: **Bruce Allardice** on "The Ten Worst Civil War Generals"

Bulletin Board



FUTURE MEETINGS

Regular meetings are held at the Holiday Inn Mart Plaza, 350 North Orleans Street, the second Friday of each month, *unless otherwise indicated*.

- June 13: Kenneth Noe, "The War in Appalachia"
- Aug. 15: Lance Herdegen, "The Iron Brigade"
- Sept. 12: Frank Varney on "General Grant's Memoirs"
- Oct. 10: Mark Bradley, Topic TBD
- Nov. 14: Steve Towne on "Civil War Espionage"
- Dec. 12: Jim Ogden, Nevins-Freeman Address

The Abraham Lincoln Bookshop's next **Virtual Book Signing** will take place on **Saturday, May 10, at 12:00 noon**. Margaret Humphreys will talk about her new book, Marrow of Tragedy: The Health Crisis of the American Civil War. Also on the program is Robert Girardi. Robert will talk about his book, The Civil War Generals: Comrades, Peers, Rivals: In Their Own Words.

On **Saturday, May 24 2014, at 12:00 noon** William Blair will talk about his book, With Malice Towards Some and John McKee will talk about his book, Loathing Lincoln. Visit <http://virtualbooksigning.net/virtualbooksigning/> for more information.



150 YEARS AGO – MAY 1864



-
- 4th:** The radical Wade-Davis Reconstruction Act passes in the U. S. House.
- 5th:** Army of the James under General Benjamin Butler [US] lands at Bermuda Hundred and City Point, east of Petersburg. The Army is comprised of two corps totaling nearly 40,000 men. Bermuda Hundred Campaign begins.
- 5th–7th:** Battle of the Wilderness. Union casualties 17,666. Confederate: 7,750
- 7th:** Battle of Rocky Face Ridge (Dalton)
- 8th–19th:** Battle of Spotsylvania. Union casualties 18,399; Confederate 9,000
- 9th–24th:** Sheridan’s Raid on Richmond
- 11th:** Battle of Yellow Tavern . General J. E. B. Stuart [CS] is mortally wounded in losing to Phillip Sheridan
- 13th:** Battle of Resaca, GA.
- 13th:** First soldier interred at Arlington National Cemetery
- 15th:** Battle of New Market. Major General John Breckinridge [CS], using a ragtag force that included VMI cadets defeats Franz Sigel’s [US] army in the Shenandoah Valley.
- 20th:** President Lincoln signs the legislation creating the Official Records
- 25th:** Battle of New Hope Church.
- 26th:** Territory of Montana is formed from the Territory of Idaho
- 27th:** Battle of Pickett’s Mill.
- 28th:** Battle of Dallas
- 31st–June 3rd:** Battle of Cold Harbor

This month in the history of the Chicago CWRT

1964 (50 years ago): Harold Hyman spoke on “Lincoln’s Wartime Education”

1989 (25 years ago): Gen. Edwin H. Simmons spoke on “Fort Fisher: Amphibious Finale to the Civil War”

2004 (10 years ago): Bruce Tap spoke on “The Committee on the Conduct of the War”

2009 (5 years ago): Jim Ogden spoke on “Chickamauga—Rescue at Horseshoe Ridge”

Special August Meeting

The CWRT has set up a Special meeting for Friday, August 15th, to be held at the Rosewood Banquet Hall and Restaurant in Rosemont, Illinois. The CWRT wants to see if a meeting place outside the Chicago Loop will be more convenient for our members. Author **Lance Herdegen**, an always-entertaining presenter, will be the speaker. More details will be forthcoming.

(over)

Time & Funds Running Out For 'Camp Asylum' Project

BY SCOTT C. BOYD

(April 2014 Civil War News)

COLUMBIA, S.C. — Archeologist Chester DePratter and his nine-person team are racing against the calendar to finish excavating a Confederate prisoner-of-war site before development begins. The dig began Jan. 6 and must end by April 30.

The aptly named Camp Asylum, a 3.5-acre site on the 181-acre grounds of South Carolina's first state mental hospital, is in the northeast corner of Columbia.

For two months Union officers lived in the open there, most taking shelter in dirt pits. Thanks in part to fresh water, adequate food and medical care only one man died.

Developer Bob Hughes contracted to buy the entire property from the state in 2010 for \$15 million. Among the conditions was that he contribute \$25,000 for an archeological study of the former POW camp.

DePratter is the head of the research division at the South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology (SCIAA), which is part of the university.

He said his total budget is \$95,000, "far short of what is needed to cover 3.5 acres of prison."

In addition to Hughes' money, DePratter received \$25,000 from the Columbia City Council and \$40,000 from a combination of private donors and the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of South Carolina in Columbia.

The four-month limit on the archeological dig came from an agreement between the city council and the developer.

Within that period, DePratter said that money was the project's biggest limitation.

"If I had twice as much money, I could hire twice as many crew," he said. "But with what I have now, it's not possible to hire more."

The Hughes project, Columbia Commons, is expected to take up to 20 years to complete. Plans currently include a baseball stadium surrounded by commercial and residential development.

Sale terms required that certain buildings on the hospital grounds be preserved.

The Prisons

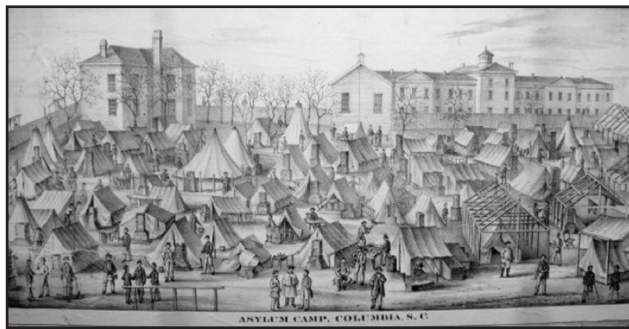
...

On Dec. 12 the remaining 1,250 prisoners were moved to the grounds of the state asylum. They were held outside in a patient exercise yard that had three brick walls.

A wooden wall was built to complete the enclosure of what became called "Camp Asylum." Some prisoners from nearby facilities were added, bringing the total again to about 1,500 men.

Roughly 300-400 guards garrisoned the camp, according to DePratter. They belonged to the South Carolina Reserves, mostly older men or invalids not suited for regular duty. Artillery units were present in case of rioting.

"It's a Civil War prison that's really different from all others," DePratter said.



Asylum Camp. From SC Military Museum

Apart from one small barracks housing 36 men, and two small buildings converted into a hospital, the prisoners "were pretty much forced to live on their own."

...

One factor in Camp Asylum's high survival rate might be the fact that the Confederate authorities issued prisoners basic rations. Cornmeal, which included cobs ground up into

kernels, was a staple along with sorghum molasses, rice and beans, DePratter said. Occasionally they would receive salt and sugar.

The Union officers were allowed to receive money from friends and family in the form of gold, silver and greenbacks.

The Confederate authorities would exchange it for Confederate currency, using the Northern money to buy badly needed war supplies overseas. DePratter said the prisoners spent their Confederate currency with local sutlers who frequented the camp.

"In one day, \$50,000 was passed out to the prisoners at Camp Asylum," he said. "They were able to obtain pretty substantial amounts of food."

...

DePratter's research includes 45 prisoner diaries. He has more than 40 notebooks with information about the prisoners and expects to write a book about Camps Sorghum and Asylum.

What he doesn't have, though, is many artifacts recovered in the dig at Camp Asylum.

"Most of [the Union officers'] personal possessions were taken from them when they were captured," he said.

"We've found some lost or stray buttons and mustache combs probably used to remove body lice."

The artifacts will be "kept in perpetuity for future study" at an Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology repository.