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Nov. 11th, Milwaukee CWRT: Rob Girardi on “Comms Command”

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Reminders

Bjorn Skaptason at the Abraham Lincoln Book Shop reminds us that the next “Virtual Book Signing” will be Nov. 11th at 6:00 p.m., Nora Titone talking about her new book, My Thoughts Be Bloody, and Roger Billings talking about Abraham Lincoln, Esq. For more information on these and upcoming events, visit www.virtualbooksigning.net or www.alincolnbookshop.com.

Jerry Kowalski informs us that a Veterans Day program entitled “Letters from Home” will be presented at Rosehill Cemetery on Nov. 7th, at 10:30 a.m. American military from the Revolution to the present will be there, to honor our veterans. Coffee and donuts will be served afterwards.

The Civil War Round Table

Volume LXI, Number 3

Chicago, Illinois

November 2010

The Nevins-Freeman Award Address

Robert I. Girardi

on “Civil War Corps Command: A Study in Leadership”

by Bruce Allardice

The American Civil War was the great battleground upon which the Regular Army of the United States came of age. For the first time, massive deployment of large armies and the logistical and intelligence networks necessary to support them were put into effect. The nature of combat and command in the Civil War necessitated the reorganization of the armies. Brigades and Divisions, previously the largest organizational bodies were replaced by the introduction of army corps for the first time. The solution to the problem was a problem in itself. No officers of the United States Army had ever commanded anything of the size and complexity of an army corps. While it is true that the army gained much practical experience in the Mexican War, that conflict was as nothing in its scope and scale and in the responsibilities it taught to senior commanders, compared to the latter conflict. The largest army in the Mexican War would have been but a weak army corps in the Civil War that followed.

A number of generals rose to command army corps in the Civil War. For some the job was too complex, for others the stepping stone to army command. On November 12th Rob Girardi will address both the nature of corps command and examine how a number of generals rose—or failed to rise—to the demands of the job.

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The Civil War Round Table

Founded December 3, 1940

Volume LXXI, Number 3

Chicago, Illinois

November 2010

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

695th REGULAR MEETING

Robert Girardi

on “Corps Command”

Friday, November 12

HOLIDAY INN MART PLAZA

350 NORTH ORLEANS STREET

Cocktails at 5:30 p.m.

Dinner at 6:30 p.m.

$45 - Members/Non-members

Entrée: Roast Pork Loin, Baked Orange Roughy, Vegetarian Plate or Fruit Slate

Cocktails

Holiday Inn Mart Plaza

695th REGULAR MEETING

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on “Civil War Corps Command: A Study in Leadership”

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U.S. Prisoner Artifacts Found At Georgia Site: Camp Lawton

By Brian Seiter

Founded December 5, 1940
1039 Hinwood
Darien, Illinois 60761
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 Hinwood, Darien, Illinois 60761, or contact bs@1865att.net.

Earl Hess addressed 51 members and guests at the 694th meeting of the Chicago Civil War Round Table on October 8, 2010, on the subject of “Sedgwick Life in the Trenches at Petersburg.” During the 292-day siege of Petersburg, the Army of Northern Virginia and its counterpart Army of the Potomac developed extensive and formidable field fortifications. Measured by linear feet of parapets, these earthworks stretched 127.4 miles and covered Petersburg and the south and east approaches to Richmond, as well as the Bermuda Hundred between the Appomattox and James Rivers. Thirty-five miles of entrenchments lay south of the Appomattox, and included 41 union forts and numerous confederate redoubts.

The trenches at Petersburg were not only longer, but deeper and with thicker parapets and more massive fields of obstruction than other entrenchments in the war. Also, the trenches at Petersburg were protect ed by ‘torpedo belts’ – 2,266 yards of Confederate earthworks north of the James were frontal by a thick belt of mines. Some 100,000 Union and Confederate troops occupied the trenches around Petersburg. The armies used wood for fuel as well as for constructing fortifications and clearing fields of fire between lines. This contributed to ecological change before the war. Forests were cut, and the area was 50% forested; after, only 22%. Forty four hundred acres of forest were lost in eleven months.

As early as August 1864, the deleterious effects of trench life were re corded by the Inspector General of Hagood’s South Carolina brigade, who wrote that “vermin abounded” and that men’s digestive organs became impaired by the ration that were issued and the manner in which they were prepared. Diarrhea and dysentery were universal. Ex terminies swelled due to staying in those dirty ditches...they are so dirty and hot you can not get air at all scarcely.” Trench life caused L.S. Rogers of the 56th North Carolina to feel as if he were imprisoned. “My mind is so confused,” he wrote. Exposure to constant sniping on piston lines exacerbated stress, although truces broke the monotony.

Debroestation also contributed to ill health. Without natural cover, enemy fire was life and death. “Some of them are so ‘fine and sticky,’ arose whenever someone walked, “You see nothing but dust at Petersburg. You smell dust, you eat dust, you drink dust. Your clothes, your blanket, your food, your drink, are all permeated with dust,” wrote the chaplain of the 102nd Pennsylvania. Rainstorms turned the dust into soupy mud and the trenches into rivers. Bombproofs provided protection but were damp and muddy and infested with rats. Poor sanitation habits made the entrenchments open cesspools and produced fields of human waste, “nuisance” and that men’s “digestive organs became impaired by the ration so it did. 5,928 Confederate soldiers deserted in the period from January through the end of March, 1865. Overall approximate casualties were 42,000, Union, and 29,000, Confederate.

Calling Petersburg a siege is a misnomer, said Hess. Contrary to popular conception, it did not foreshadow the static warfare of WWI. Rather, it was an extended component of a 165-mile mobile offensive which took place over the year from the Wilderness to Appomattox. Petersburg was never completely cut off from the outside world, and the Confederates re suppled their lines and attempted to maneu ver Lee out of his. This he ultimately did on April 3, 1865.

A recording of this (and every) meeting is available from Hal Ardell, audio librarian. Contact Hal at (717) 774-6781 or ha229@ameritech.net.
The Civil War Round Table

Battlefield Preservation

BY BRIAN SEITER

U.S. Prisoner Artifacts Found At Georgia Site; Camp Lawton Explored by Scott C. Boyd from October Civil War News of numer-ous artifacts from the camp was announ-ced by Georgia Southern University and the two other major organizations involved.

The Georgia Department of Natu-ral Resources (DNR) operates Magn-olia Springs State Park, where the majority of Camp Lawton’s remains are. The rest are in the adjacent Bo Ginn National Fish Hatchery which the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service administers. The artifacts were found on this site. The DNR commissioned the archeological work by Georgia Southern Univer-sity which led to the discoveries.

The team is led by Georgia South-ern graduate student J. Kevin Chap-man. His faculty mentor, Professor of Anthropology Dr. Sue M. Moore, supervises Chapman and five other graduate students. Derden, who is writing a book about Camp Lawton, said he was “adopted as the man. His faculty mentor, Professor Emeritus of History Dr. John K. Derden, a Union soldier prisoner-of-war Oct. 19th, said he was “adopted as the project historian” when he spoke to the Georgia Southern University Foundation has enlisted many of the camp’s 42-acre stockade walls and maybe the footing for the brick ovens, but we did not expect to find artifacts,” Moore said. “We had pretty much assumed those were already gone. It turned out when we excavated they were not, in fact, gone.” They were found in the spring on the hatchery side of the camp.

Chapman wrote on the project web site: “We began to retrieve an amaz-ing collection of artifacts proving that the site was of unexpected impor-tance. The artifacts are not only visually impressive, but they also tell an incredible story individu-ally and as a whole.” He estimates they have found 380 artifacts so far. Some of them will go on display at the Georgia Southern University Museum October 10th. A clay to-bacco pipe with an improvised lead bowl was Chapman’s favorite find.

“The idea of a lead bowl or a pipe is kind of baffling until you think that’s probably the only alter-na-tive that soldier had,” a tourniquet buckle is one of Moore’s favorite finds as well. “It strongly suggests that the soldier isn’t going to fight any more battles; he’s going to do the best he can to survive and come home.”

The DNR continues to retrieve artifacts from the fortifications and clearing fields of obstruction than other en-trancements in the war. Also, the trenches at Petersburg were protect-ed by “torpedo belts” - 2,266 yards of Confederate earthworks north of the James were flanked by a thick belt of mines.

Some 100,000 Union and Confed-erate troops occupied the trenches around Petersburg. The armies used wood for fuel as well as for construct-ing fortifications and clearing fields of fire between lines. This contrib-uted to ecological change: before the war, the area was 50% forested; after, only 22%. Forty four hundred acres of forest were lost in eleven months.

As early as August 1864, the dele-terious effects of trench life were re-corded by the Inspector General of Hagood’s South Carolina brigade, who wrote that “vermin abounded” and that mews “digestive organs became impaired by the rations they reused to hold something else, we don’t know yet.” She said it has preserved cloth in it. “That’s a real rare thing for us to be able to find.”

As far as Confederate prisons go, Camp Lawton was one of a kind, according to Chapman. He said the Confederacy had 36 major prisons, 18 of which had stockades. Camp Lawton is the only prison stockade with its remains intact, he said. The rest have been looted or ploughed over.

The camp’s 42-acre stockade was also the largest, exceeding the 26.5 acres at Camp Sumerter at An-dersonville, Ga. ... For information about the camp go to www.georgiasouthern.edu/camplawton and www.fws.gov/camplawtonse.

Good News—Our CWRTs preser-vation donations have helped the Johnson Island Civil Prison War site preserve 17 acres which include most of the prison depot. The Chi-cago CWRT will be listed on a bronze plaque as a donor contribu-tor to the site preservation. Visit the Johnson Island website for more info.

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Thomas Jackson Straughorn of the 27th North Carolina was repelled by the thought of being in “those dirty ditches...they are so dirty and hot you can get no air at all scarcely.” Trench life caused L.S. Rogers of the 56th North Carolina to feel as if he were imprisoned. “My mind is so confused,” he wrote. Exposure to constant sniping on pickup lines exac-ted stress, although truces broke the monopoly.

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Poor sanitation habits made the en-trancements open cesspools and pro-duced fields of human waste, “nui-sances” to the lines.

In dry weather, dust caked on sol-diers’ bodies and they were beset with swarms of flies. Combined with a shortage of soap, the itching this caused affected health and welfare. “The greatest evil you are now producing sickness among the men in the trenches,” Lee wrote in August 1864, “and must affect their selfrespect and their morale.” And so it did: 5,928 Confederate soldiers deserted in the period from January through the end of March, 1865. Overall approximate casualties were 42,000, Union, and 26,000, Confed-erate.

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Camp Douglas Preservation

A new effort to preserve the Camp Douglas site in Bronzeville is quickly building. The Camp Douglas Restoration Foundation has been formed to establish a per-manent memorial as well as interpre-tive and educational facilities. The Foundation has enlisted many of Bronzeville’s community groups, and all are participating and supporting the effort, as are the Chicago History Museum and the DuSable Museum. Funding for an archaeological dig has also been approved by Loyola University for summer 2011. Volun-teers are needed for fund raising, community outreach, gallery design, developing programs, and research. To learn more or to sign on to help, visit www.campdouglas.org.
**Grapeshot**

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**Call by Monday Nov. 8**

Make your reservations by Monday, Nov. 8 by calling 630-440-3842; or emailing chicagocwrt@earthlink.net, with the names of your party and choice of entrée.

If a cancellation becomes necessary after dinner reservations have been made, please call the number before 9 a.m. Thursday.

We are offering the option of choosing entree to have dinner and coming only for the silent auction at 7:30 p.m., for a charge of $10 per person.

Parking at the Holiday Inn is $12 with a validated receipt.

The Neville-Freeman Award Address Robert I. Girardi on “Civil War Corps Command: A Study in Leadership”

**By Bruce Allardice**

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