



# THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



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794th REGULAR MEETING, Friday, November 13<sup>th</sup>, 2020

**John R. Scales on:**

***“General Nathan Bedford Forrest”***

**Zoom Meeting. Time: Nov 13, 2020 07:30 PM CST**

**Meeting ID: 858 6404 9376 Passcode: 089974**



Nathan Bedford Forrest was one of the most intriguing and controversial characters to emerge during the Civil War. Books and articles on the man span the gamut from hero worship because of his remarkable battlefield victories, to condemnation for his involvement with the slaughter at Fort Pillow and later, his association with the Ku Klux Klan. Retired Special Forces brigadier general John R. Scales plows entirely new ground with his new book, [The Battles and Campaigns of General Nathan Bedford Forrest, 1861--1865](#), a careful and unique examination of Forrest's wartime activities and how his actions affected the war in the Western Theater.

General Scales utilizes upon his own extensive military background to help evaluate and explain how and why Forrest grew in command ability and potential as a result of his experiences--or didn't.

General Scales attended the University of Alabama 1966-70, graduating in 1970 with a degree in physics and a commission as an infantry lieutenant in the U. S. Army. He graduated from infantry officer basic, airborne and Ranger schools before being assigned to the 82nd Airborne Division. Later he led a rifle platoon in combat in Vietnam and joined the 101st Airborne (A/1-506 Infantry) upon return to the US. Leaving active duty in 1975, he joined the 20th Special

Forces Group (Airborne) of the Alabama National Guard while getting a master's degree at Alabama and becoming Special Forces qualified. Over the years, while first teaching and later working as a scientist in Huntsville, he commanded a Special Forces Operational Detachment A, a company, a battalion, and the 20th Group itself. He also received a Ph.D. in systems engineering from the University of Alabama in Huntsville. Selected for promotion to general and assignment to US Army Special Forces Command, he was first the deputy commander and later the acting commanding general. After 9/11 he was assigned to the Joint Special Operations Command and led a Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force in Afghanistan. General Scales retired from the military in late 2002 and continued his career as an engineer in Huntsville, being granted five patents and publishing three military history books, the latest of which is on the military career of General Forrest.

## **Battlefield Preservation**

The CWRT of Chicago recently sent from the preservation account the following two checks:

\$500.00 American Battlefield Protection Program in honor of Earl Hess being our Nevins-Freeman Award winner for this year. This was Earl's choice for the donation.

\$2000.00 American Battlefield Trust/ Remembering Ed Bearss/Vicksburg.

David Duncan of the ABT responded:

Dear Friends at the Chicago Civil War Roundtable,

Thank you so much for your generous gift in honor of Ed Bearss. I can report that we have received more than \$50,000 in tribute gifts, all of which will go to help preserve, restore, or interpret land associated with Ed's beloved Vicksburg Campaign. I understand that he was laid to rest in a cemetery near Champion Hill, which is perfectly appropriate. It's hard to believe we won't hear that voice again, but none of us will ever forget it, or all the he did for this cause.

Thank you again for your generosity, I really appreciate it, and I hope you all continue to stay well. Let me know if I can ever be of help or service to you. Take care.

**David N. Duncan**

President, American Battlefield Trust

On behalf of the CWRT, Preservation Chair Brian Seiter replied:

David,

Thanks for the update on tribute gifts in honor of Ed Bearss. Ed was one of a kind and will be missed by all of us. We were lucky to have met him. Thank you for all your work on battlefield preservation. Take care.

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Brian Seiter  
Chicago CWRT

## Virtual Civil War Events

The Congress of Civil War Round Tables is sponsoring a series of virtual Civil War Lectures by some of the nation's leading historians.

Visit <http://www.cwrtcongress.org/lectures.html> to view the complete schedule and register.

### October Meeting

By Mark Matranga

Stuart Sanders spoke to The Civil War Round Table at its 795<sup>th</sup> Regular Meeting on October 9, 2020 on "Perryville Under Fire: The Aftermath of Kentucky's Largest Civil War Battle." Sanders served as Executive Director of the Perryville Battlefield Preservation Association which spearheaded the effort to expand the site into an exceptional example of battlefield preservation. He now works at The Kentucky Historical Society where he is Director of Research and Collections. He is author of additional titles: "Mill Springs," "Maney's Brigade at Perryville," and his current book, "Murder on the Ohio Belle."

All Civil War battles produced human and environmental destruction, but Perryville may be exceptional as it was a small village in a rural area. The infrastructure of Perryville, population 300, and surrounding towns lacked the facilities to care for a massive amount of casualties: more than 7,500 killed and wounded, the Federals losing 800 dead and Confederates suffering over 50% casualties of the number engaged in a five hour battle. Every home, barn, shed and stable, anything with a roof was used. A surgeon from Mackville reported that "every house was a hospital." The Goodnight farm was served as the main confederate hospital. There were so few places to house the wounded that many were taken as far as away as New Albany, Indiana. Many wounded received little relief, medical supplies were limited and food scarce.

The scene at Perryville in the wake of the battle was one of desolation and carnage. Union troops were loath to bury dead rebels, permitting hogs liberated from their enclosures to roam the fields and consume human flesh. Sanders described the scene at the John C. Russell home at Dixville Crossroads, where surgeons amputated limbs without using anesthesia. Young William McCord saw amputated limbs stacked four to five feet high at the Henry P. Bottom house; the dead had coffee sacks over their heads. Due to drought conditions, wounded soldiers were forced to drink from stagnant pools which produced water-borne diseases. Limbs protruded up

from shallow graves on the Kirkland property; upon witnessing this macabre sight Mrs. Kirkland left and never returned.

Sam Watkins of "Company Aych" First Tennessee Regiment fame could not remember "a harder contest or more evenly fought battle than that of Perryville," commenting that both sides were "whipped." This applied to the citizens of the area as well. Homes in the town were riddled with shot and shell. Most civilians had fled and upon returning found their homes ransacked and clothes gone, taken and torn for use as bandages. Henry P. Bottom may have suffered the greatest loss: 2 horses, 9 cows, 30 sheep, 3,000 bushels of corn, 50 bushels of oats, 22 tons of hay, and 8,500/4,500 pounds of pork and bacon, respectively. Unable to obtain relief from the government, Bottom was ruined and died a broken man.

Churches and public buildings were commandeered as hospitals as well. Antioch Church served as the main Union hospital. Perryville Methodist and Presbyterian housed union troops while Perryville Christian kept wounded confederates. All suffered serious damage. The Ewing Institute, a noted ante-bellum young women's school, was "tore all to pieces" and "more or less abused," according to locals. Desks used for firewood, windows smashed, stoves destroyed, the Institute was used as a hospital until April 1863, one of the last buildings so used.

Danville, a town of 4,500, almost doubled with wounded and occupying soldiers following the battle. Buildings and equipment at Centre College were destroyed while used for hospitals. Bragg's army retreated to Harrodsburg which became a major depot for confederate wounded; later, union soldiers filled the town as the enemy moved south. Many died in Bardstown on the retreat from Kentucky. The town's buildings were used for hospitals as late as June 1863. Disease broke out among soldiers and citizenry. Danville's Elizabeth Patterson related that "not a day passed without one or more funerals," some of them townsfolk.

Perryville had a huge footprint. Relatives from nearby states travelled to the battlefield to find their loved ones. This had tragic overtones as graves were not properly marked and bodies were not properly interred. Despite his losses, Henry P. Bottom buried most of the Confederate dead in mass graves near the monument that now sits on the battlefield. Despite his efforts to identify the corpses, all buried there are listed as unknown. And as Sanders pointed out, Perryville itself was a casualty, its economy and all facets of its social life devastated by the impact of the battle.

The impact on the environment, physical and human, of the communities where Civil War battles occurred has been taken up only recently by historians. "Aftermath" is an important addition to this subject as Sanders richly details the wonton destruction and loss armies leave behind when moving on to the next campaign.



## BULLETIN BOARD

The **Kenosha Civil War Museum** is putting on a bunch of programs which can be watched on facebook:

Sir Butternut Comes to Madison

**Friday, November 13, Noon. Presenter: Larry Desotell**

Among the Badgers: Rediscovering Sites Associated with Abraham and Mary Lincoln in Wisconsin

**Friday, November 20, Noon. Presenter: Steven Rogstad**

For more on programs at the museum, visit <https://museums.kenosha.org/civilwar/events/>

The **Abraham Lincoln Bookstore** is presenting a Facebook Live event Nov. 19<sup>th</sup> at 3:30 CST, part of its "A House Divided" series, with author David Reynolds talking about his new biography of our greatest president, *Abe*.

On November 10 **Rob Girardi** will present "Railroad Defense in the Atlanta Campaign" to the Waukesha CWRT.

### More Upcoming Local Civil War Events

Due to government-ordered shutdowns, CWRT events are being cancelled or going online on an ad hoc basis. Contact the sponsoring organization for up to date details. Check the **Announcements** section of the CWRT's website for additional coming events.

Nov. 4th, Kankakee Valley CWRT: Don Chamberlain on "Strategies and Tactics in the Civil War"

Nov. 6th, Northern Illinois CWRT: Laurie Schiller on "David Stuart" (Zoom)

Nov. 10th, McHenry County CWRT: Don Hatch on "Road Trippin Through History"

Nov. 13th, **Chicago CWRT**: John R. Scales on "General Nathan Bedford Forrest" (Virtual Presentation)

Nov. 17th, Lincoln-Davis CWRT: Jerry Wooten on "The Battle of Johnsonville"

Nov. 19th, South Suburban CWRT: David Connon on "Iowa Confederate Soldiers" (Zoom Presentation)

Nov. 20th, Salt Creek CWRT: Rob Girardi on "Lincoln and the Common Soldier" (Zoom)

## Future Chicago CWRT Meetings

**Note: As of now, the Oct.-Dec. meetings will be “online”**

Dec. 10th: Dave Powell on *Union Command Failure in the Shenandoah*

Jan. 8<sup>th</sup>, 2021: Jennifer Murray on *General George Meade*

Feb. 12th: Leslie Goddard presents *Clara Barton*

Mar. 12th: Greg Biggs, *The Nevin-Freeman Address*

Apr. 9th: Ron Kirkwood on *Too Much for Human Endurance: The Spangler Farm Hospitals*

May 14th: Michael Hardy on *General Lee's Immortals*



Reminder: Stay healthy!