

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



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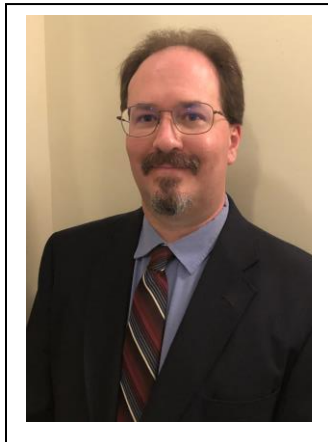
February 2023

815th REGULAR MEETING, Friday, February 10th, 2023

Charles Knight on "Robert E. Lee"

**Live/Zoom Meeting. Time: Feb. 10th, 2023, 07:30 PM CST.
Zoom Option ID 845 3227 1496; No Passcode needed**

NOTE: The meetings for the rest of 2023 will be held at the Holiday Inn Oak Brook, 17W 350 22nd St., Oakbrook Terrace.



Douglas S. Freeman's Pulitzer Prize-winning three-volume biography of Robert E. Lee is a masterful reconstruction of the man's life. So exhaustive was Freeman's research that he often boasted he could account for every hour of Lee's life from West Point until his death. Freeman's Lee is thorough, but it isn't THAT thorough. Often neglected in Freeman's Lee and other studies of the general or of his various battles and campaigns is what Lee was doing when he wasn't in the spotlight.

Charles Knight's new *From Arlington to Appomattox: Robert E. Lee's Civil War Day by Day, 1861-1865* recreates those four years of Lee's life--at least as much as is possible at 150+ years distance. It is often forgotten that in addition to his duties as a general, Lee was still a husband, father, and friend. He lost a daughter, sister, two grandchildren, daughter-in-law, and his home during the war. In

this presentation Knight shares some of the results of years of research into Lee's actions during the war years; previously unknown sources, inconsistencies that confused Freeman and dozens of other historians over the years, memorable anecdotes of Lee's daily life, and other historical "nuggets" that came to light in his research.

Charles Knight is native of Richmond, VA, where he developed a love of history at an early age. He has worked at museums and historic sites for more than 20 years in Virginia, Arizona, and North Carolina, and has given historical presentations to audiences across the country. He is the author of *Valley Thunder: The Battle of New Market* (Savas Beatie, 2010), *From Arlington to Appomattox: Robert E. Lee's Civil War Day by Day* (Savas Beatie, 2021), as well as numerous magazine and journal articles, and was a historical advisor on the 2014 film *Field of Lost Shoes*, about the Battle of New Market. Knight is currently working on a biography of Confederate general and railroad magnate William Mahone; a history of Gen. Douglas MacArthur's Honor Guard company; and editing the memoirs and papers of Gen. R.E. Lee's aide Charles Venable. Knight is the curator of military history at the NC Museum of History in Raleigh and resides in Holly Springs, NC, with his wife and children.

Battlefield Preservation

With its recent addition of 2.57 acres at Port Hudson and nearly 20 acres at Mansfield, the American Battlefield Trust has arrived at a preservation total of almost 772 acres of hallowed ground saved throughout the Bayou State.

The majority of this Louisiana land was protected through strides made at Port Hudson and Mansfield. Since 1993, the Trust has saved 258.57 acres at the former. The latter encompasses even more land, with 459.29 acres preserved. Carrying priceless value that adds to the state's expansive history, these battlefields — both state historic sites — will now grow and augment opportunities for visitors to discover the many stories ingrained in the soil.

Port Hudson: The now-preserved 2.57-acre tract here fell well within the Confederates' defenses and was bombarded almost nonstop during the siege. But the property also contains a portion of the post-siege earthworks that were constructed by the Union's Corps d'Afrique, a unit that later became better known as part of the U.S. Colored Troops. In fact, during the early Union assaults on Port Hudson, the 1st and 3rd Louisiana Native Guard were among the first Black soldiers engaged in major combat actions during the Civil War. The Trust has now saved 258.57 acres at Port Hudson, a preservation legacy that began all the way back in 1993.

Mansfield: The recently acquired nearly 20-acre tract covers land tied to the second phase of the 1864 battle, which caused Banks and his men to ultimately withdraw. However, the opposing forces met again the following day at Pleasant Hill.

For more, visit <https://www.battlefields.org/preserve/celebrate-our-victories/protecting-past-20-acres-saved-port-hudson-mansfield?ms=email6GTnondon>

January Meeting

By Mark Matranga

The Civil War Round Table's 815th Regular Meeting on January 13, 2023, featured prior Nevins-Freeman Award recipient **Rob Girardi** who took the Round Table on the cross-country sojourn of the "Union POWs at Camp Douglas," soldiers captured in battle and exchanged but who were treated as prisoners by their own government. Camp Douglas is best known as the initial training ground of some 40 thousand union volunteers and later as a prison camp. "Disease and scandal" were part of the history of Civil War prisons, Girardi declared, but his tale was one with a different twist.

At the start of the war there was no uniform system in place to provide for exchange of prisoners. The Dix-Hill Cartel was formulated in mid-1862. This permitted the exchange of prisoners of equal rank, with soldiers basically being paroled home until 'exchanged,' when they would, in theory, rejoin their units. The cartel was eventually abandoned the following year due to the Confederacy's refusal to treat African-American soldiers as prisoners of war instead of runaway slaves. But application of the cartel was not so uniform in the case of the Harper's Ferry garrison which surrendered on September 15, 1862.

Some 12,700 union troops surrendered at Harper's Ferry, the largest number to surrender up to that time. The terms of surrender were ambiguous: the soldiers were given to understand they were exempt from all further service. However, this was not the case and, indeed, the soldiers were not allowed to go home. Instead, under their own officers they were marched to Frederick, Maryland and then to Camp Parole, Annapolis, under the watchful eye of General Tyler. But Camp Parole was inundated with confederate prisoners from the recent battles near Manassas and the invasion of Maryland as well as Kentucky that began in September 1862. Camp Chase in Ohio was also filled. Therefore, the decision was made to transfer the Harper's Ferry garrison to Camp Douglas in Chicago.

Camp Douglas had been housing confederates, but a group of prisoners had been released, so the Harper's Ferry men were put in cattle cars and, unpaid, unfed, and

unwashed, were carted west in unsanitary conditions. Many of the soldiers, especially from Ohio, had been led to believe they would be allowed to exit the trains at their hometowns and became rebellious; some deserted. Girardi pointed out that some units eventually experienced more desertions on route to Chicago than throughout the war. Even men from the Garibaldi Guards (39th New York) deserted, though far from home, rather than stay in what one called a “hellish den of iniquity.”

Once arriving in Chicago on September 28th, the men were taken aback that they were being put in barracks recently occupied by enemy soldiers. One Vermont regiment chose to bunk in the stables which the men claimed were cleaner than the barracks. Some found the nearby Fairgrounds a better location than the camp. That conditions within the camp were poor cannot be questioned: low lying land that turned swampy with fall rains led to the spread of disease. Smallpox and diarrhea caused many deaths in the 126th and 111th New York Regiments and others. Riots and mutinies ensued; it became necessary to call in city police and, on October 23rd, regular soldiers to stop the riots. Meanwhile, “determined to destroy the camp by fire,” the soldiers burned down 13 barracks at one point; and, for example, the 60th Ohio, protesting their rain-soaked blankets, tore down 600 feet of fencing. Some troops even fired on the flag.

Eventually, Secretary Stanton advised General Tyler to ease strict discipline and the men were at long last paid - \$13 a month. Also, they were given better food and clothing and were also permitted to go into town where they visited the usual haunts – saloons, gambling parlors, and houses of prostitution – and caused more havoc. But this was short lived as most of the men were exchanged by the end November 1862. Only one unit remained, the 65th Illinois, under the command of Colonel Cameron who oversaw the camp after General Tyler was reassigned on November 20th.

Girardi lays out a sad story of mistreatment of loyal troops who had already suffered the indignity of surrender. Treated as virtual prisoners of war, the captured units were subjected to undeserved epithets from their peers. But once restored to the Army of the Potomac they rendered outstanding service, the 126th New York and the Vermont regiments, among others. And Girardi notes that those deserters who went home reported back to their units once they learned they had been exchanged. Those who didn't, who remained at Camp Douglas after succumbing to disease, now lie at rest in Rosehill Cemetery on Chicago's North Side.



BULLETIN BOARD

Our in-person meetings are currently held at:

Holiday Inn Oak Brook

17W 350 22nd St., Oakbrook Terrace

Parking at the Holiday Inn is FREE

Dinner \$40.00 Members and Non- Members

Cocktails at 5:30, Dinner at 6:30

Presentation only is \$10 per person.

The **Kenosha Civil War Museum** is putting on the following in-person/virtual programs:

Friday, February 10th, noon. "A Game of Whist: An Alleged Sheboygan Connection to Lincoln's Assassin" Presented by Steven Rogstad

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

Bruce Allardice had an article published in the current (Spring) issue of the magazine *America's Civil War*. Titled "Loose Lips," it relates how northern newspapers gave away vital military secrets early in the war. The next issue of *ACW* will feature his article on a Civil War figure who should be more known, Peter B. Garesche, who ran the Confederate Navy's Gunpowder works.

More Upcoming Local Civil War Events

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

Feb. 3rd, Northern Illinois CWRT: Mary Abroe on "Civil War Centennial: Rhetoric, Reality, and the Bounds of Selective Memory"

Feb. 4th, Two Old Goats in Cedar Lake: Bill Mitchell on "Lincoln and the Constitution"

Feb. 6th, Rockford CWRT: David Dixon, "Emotions and Allegiance: Augustus Wright and Civil War Loyalty"

Feb. 19th, Milwaukee CWRT: Charlie Knight on "Robert E. Lee"

Feb. 18th, Salt Creek CWRT: Paul Wood on "General Lee's War"

Feb. 21st, Lincoln-Davis CWRT: Harold Knudsen on "James Longstreet and the Civil

War"

Feb. 23rd, South Suburban CWRT: Larry Korczyk on "Gettysburg"

Future Chicago CWRT Meetings

Mar. 10th: Dwight Hughes on "Unlike Anything That Ever Floated"

Apr. 14th: Richard Holloway on "The Red River Campaign"

May 12th: Sean Michael Chick on "Grant's Left Hook: The Bermuda Hundred Campaign"

June 9th: Mark Zimmerman on "The Retreat from Nashville"

The **Abraham Lincoln Book Shop's** facebook page airs "Take a Break with History", every first and third Friday of the month at 1 pm CST. Their next "House Divided" author interview is Feb. 16th, 3:30 CST, with Michael Zuckert discussing his new book on Lincoln, "A Nation So Conceived." For more, visit <https://alincolnbookshop.com/>

Chicago CWRT Preservation Committee Donations

The last half of 2022, our CWRT's Preservation Fund made the following donations: \$1500 to the Rich Mountain Battlefield Foundation; \$500 to the Shenandoah Valley Battlefield Foundation; and \$500 to the Adams County (Gettysburg) Historical Society. Additional amounts were donated from the CWRT's general fund.

Red River 2023 Tour Update....

The tour will be a one bus tour on a bus with a capacity for 56. Early registration for the tour includes a \$200 deposit to reserve your seat on the bus and a free Tour T-Shirt. After we have reached 56-person capacity there will be a wait list for the tour.

The deadline for Early registration is Feb 1, 2023 after which total tour cost will need to be paid.

To register for the tour see Curt Thomasco at upcoming meetings for a copy of the Tour Itinerary and Tour Registration Form along with your deposit. Also please note that the Tour Itinerary and Tour Registration Form can be downloaded from the Chicago CWRT website.