

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



Volume LXXXIV, Number 9

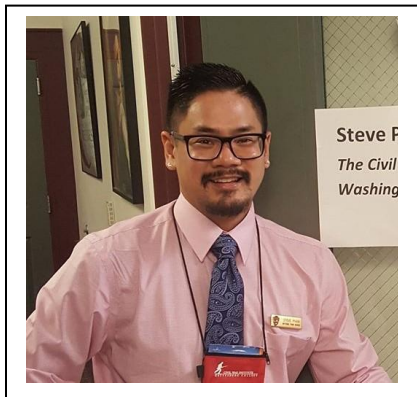
Chicago, Illinois

May 2025

837th REGULAR MEETING, Friday, May 9th, 2025

Steve Phan on *Asian and Pacific Islanders During the Civil War*

**Live/Zoom Meeting. Time: May 9th, 2025, 07:30 PM CST.
Zoom Option ID 845 3227 1496; No Passcode needed**



To commemorate the Civil War Sesquicentennial (2011-2015), the National Park Service created the handbook “Asian and Pacific Islanders and the Civil War,” which highlighted the forgotten service of dozens of soldiers who served in the Union and Confederate armies and navies during the Civil War. Historian Steve T. Phan, who was featured in the publication, will present a lecture on the unknown citizen soldiers of Asian descent who participated in some of the war's largest battles, and campaigns in nearly every military theatre from

Virginia to California.

Steve T. Phan is a Park Ranger and serves as the Chief of Interpretation at Camp Nelson National Monument. A military history scholar of the Civil War era, Phan's research focuses on military occupation, operational command, African American soldiers and refugees, and fortifications during the Civil War. Steve was nominated for the National Park Service Tilden Award for Excellence in Interpretation in 2019 and 2020. He holds a master's degree in American History from Middle Tennessee State University.

Battlefield Preservation

Dear ____:

Last month, our Chief Land Preservation Officer noticed something shocking at **Malvern Hill** — a backhoe clearing land for a half-million-dollar home.

This wasn't just any land. This was the spot where the Confederates launched repeated assaults against the Union, shaping the outcome of the Peninsula Campaign in 1862.

That historic land in Virginia was almost lost forever.

Thanks to quick action, we've secured the opportunity to preserve **two acres at Malvern Hill** — but we didn't stop there. Now, we have a rare chance to [save 210 acres across four battlefields](#) that shaped the course of the Civil War:

Malvern Hill: The final battle of the Seven Days Campaign, where Union artillery fire shattered Confederate attacks, marking a crucial turning point.

Brandy Station: The largest cavalry battle of the war and the moment when Union horsemen proved they could match J.E.B. Stuart's legendary Confederate cavalry.

New Market Heights: A battlefield where U.S. Colored Troops fought with extraordinary courage, earning 14 Medals of Honor in one of the war's most pivotal moments.

New Market: A crucial battle in the Shenandoah Valley where young Virginia Military Institute cadets famously charged into combat.

Thanks to **matching grants from government partners and generous donors**, [every \\$1 you give will be multiplied by \\$6.44](#). That means a gift of \$50 saves \$322 worth of battlefield land!

Time is running out! Will you help save these four battlefields today?

'Til the battle is won.

David Duncan, President, American Battlefield Trust

April Presentation

By Mark Matranga

The Civil War Round Table's 836th Regular Meeting on April 9, 2025, featured **Phil Spaugy** on "The 19th Indiana and The Iron Brigade." Spaugy's talk highlighted the leaders of this celebrated unit as well as its crucial role on McPherson's Ridge on July 2, 1863. In all, his approach reflected how well a volunteer regiment led by aggressive commanders could perform under extremely stressful combat conditions.

The 19th Indiana Infantry Regiment was mustered in at Camp Morton at Indianapolis on July 18, 1861, with Solomon 'Long Sol' Meredith its Colonel. Known originally as the 'Swamp Hogs', the 19th was brigaded with three Wisconsin regiments, becoming part of the "Black Hats," the only Army of the Potomac brigade composed entirely of westerners. Its baptism of fire came at Groveton on August 28, 1862, when the brigade was ambushed by elements of Jackson's Wing of Lee's army; later, it covered the army's retreat.

Less than three weeks later at South Mountain the 19th battled up the precipitous slope of the National Road, facing off with Colquitt's Brigade at a stone fence and helping secure Turner's Gap. It was there that the unit was christened with the Iron Brigade." As Spaugy noted, certain New York regiments considered themselves the original, but reigning expert Lance Herdegen considers the now famous General McClellan remark "They must be made of iron" comment as establishing the western unit's entitlement to the name.

After South Mountain and the brutal fight with Hood's Brigade in the Cornfield, the brigade was depleted. Recognizing this, the army augmented its ranks by adding the 24th Michigan Infantry. Also, Meredith was promoted and now commanded the brigade – Col. Samuel Williams took command of the regiment. It was with this reinforcement and new commander that the 19th marched to Gettysburg on July 1, 1863.

Camped overnight at Marsh Creek, its picket line on Warfield Ridge, the regiment set out toward the sounds of Buford's guns west of town. As it marched past Seminary Ridge, General Reynolds ordered the brigade to attack "For God's sake and drive those fellows out the woods." Shortly thereafter, the general received his fatal wound. The 19th engaged with Archer's Brigade and with the 24th Michigan flanking the right of the enemy line, pushed the confederates back across Willoughby Run, capturing its commander in the process.

Following the morning action, there was a lull in the battle. At 3 pm, the confederates launched a massive attack – 3,000 men from Heth's Division - against the four Iron Brigade regiments on the ridge. Vastly overmatched by Pettigrew's Brigade that outnumbered them by an estimated four to one, the 19th and 24th Michigan, their flank in the air, were forced into what has been called and "obstinate, ragged and fighting withdrawal" through the swale to Seminary Ridge. Later, brigades from Pender's Division overwhelmed their position along a rail barricade at the Seminary, necessitating retreat to the hills south of town.

Hoosier losses on July 1 were enormous: 27 killed, 133 wounded, 50 captured/missing, a 68.2% casualty rate. The color guard was decimated; several were killed, including Sgt. Major Asa Blanchard. Col. Williams had exhorted his men, "Boys, we must hold our colors on this line or lie here under them." It appears his men took this order literally, based on Spaugy's description of how the color guard was cut to pieces.

In searching sources outside Spaugy's lecture, I ventured upon a master's student's paper entitled "An Average Regiment: A Re-Examination of the 19th Indiana Volunteer Infantry." Among other arguments, the author cites General Wadsworth, comparing his division with all others that day, said they "performed their whole duty without an exception" and that none could be particularly commended...without doing injustice to other equally meritorious." The author takes this to mean the 19th did nothing noteworthy.

This seems incongruous: The 19th Indiana's losses were eleventh in severity of thirty regiments engaged and included Lt. Col. Dudley who was captured and lost a leg. For those whose losses were less, to consider them average would be tantamount to diminishing the heroism of a Marine who died on the beach at Iwo Jima merely because many others died there as well. Importantly, Corps commander General Doubleday commended multiple men in the regiment, including Col. Williams; Wadsworth's comment appears rather complimentary, judicious.

The July 1 meeting engagement gained valuable time for the army to concentrate; that this was the object was apparent in the actions of others. The 19th and its sister units, overwhelmed by superior numbers, still performed well despite failing to hold their position. As Phil Spaugy presented the 19th Indiana of the "Iron Brigade of the West," one could hardly consider the regiment average, unless one wished to demean the concept of uncommon valor being a common virtue among fighting men in desperate circumstances.



BULLETIN BOARD

Our in-person meetings are currently held at:

Holiday Inn Oakbrook

350 W 22nd St., Oakbrook Terrace

Parking at the Holiday Inn is FREE

Dinner \$50.00 Members and Non- Members

Cocktails at 5:30, Dinner at 6:30

Presentation only is \$10 per person.

May 9th, noon at the **Kenosha Civil War Museum**, Drs. Kate Williams-McWhorter and Gerald McWhorter present "New Philadelphia, Illinois: Seven Ways to Freedom"

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

May 6th, at the McHenry Public Library, **Rob Girardi** will present "Abraham Lincoln and the Common Soldier"

More Upcoming Local Civil War Events

May 2nd, Northern Illinois CWRT: David Powell on "The Union Assaults of Kennesaw Mountain, June 27, 1864"

May 8th, Milwaukee CWRT: Steve Phan on "Asian and Pacific Islanders During the Civil War"

May 13th, McHenry County CWRT: Dennis Doyle on "Illinois Regiments at Gettysburg"

May 13th, Southwest Michigan CWRT: Evan Kutzler on "A Courtship on Johnson's Island and Beyond"

May 17th, Salt Creek CWRT: Rob Girardi on "General John Logan"

May 20th, Lincoln-Davis CWRT: John Horn on "The Wilson-Kautz Raid"

May 22nd, South Suburban CWRT: Charlie Rebesco, topic TBA

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

Future Chicago CWRT Meetings

June 13th: Dave Powell (Nevins-Freeman Award) on "Lost Opportunities in the Atlanta Campaign"

Sept. 12th: James Pula on "Dan Butterfield"

Oct. 10th: Kim Harris as "Libby Custer"

Nov. 14th: Chris Kolakowski, topic TBA

Dec. 12th: Brian Jordan, topic TBA

Jan. 9th, 2026: TBA

Feb. 13th: Keith Bohannon on TBA

Mar. 13th: Clifford Roberts on "Castle Pinckney"

Apr. 10th: Wayne Motts, The Nevins-Freeman Address

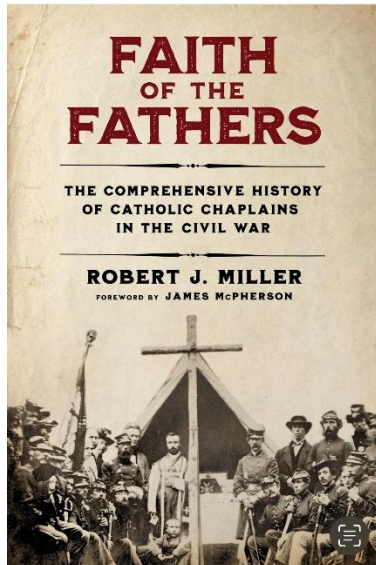
May 12th: Chris Mackowski on TBA

June 12th: Alex Rossino, TBA

The **Abraham Lincoln Book Shop's** "House Divided" series will talk with A. Wilson Greene May 8th, at 3:30 CST, on his new book *A Campaign of Giants: The Battle for Petersburg: Volume 2: From the Crater's Aftermath to the Battle of Burgess Mill*.

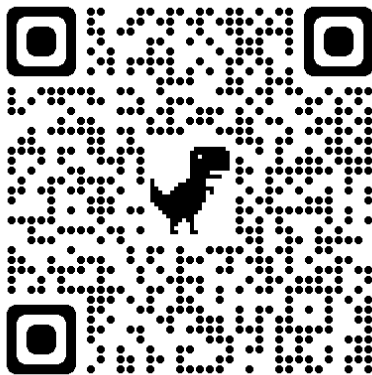
For more, visit <https://alincolnbookshop.com/>

Our own **Rev. Bob Miller** had a new book come out April 1st. In *Faith of the Fathers*, Reverend Miller examines the lives of 126 priest-chaplains—every Catholic priest who served during the Civil War. People can order it now at Amazon or at Notre Dame Press itself.



Faith of the Fathers brings to light the forgotten stories of courageous chaplains whose commitments to faith and to men at war during America's most divisive conflict have long been overlooked. The Reverend Robert J. Miller reflects on the importance of religion and faith in nineteenth-century America. As a culture of death and horror raged around them, Catholic priest-chaplains met the needs of soldiers and officers alike, providing years of faithful and dedicated service in hospitals, prisons, battlefields, and camps.

Whether ministering to Union or Confederate soldiers (or both), in eastern or western theaters, in battle or camp, these priests risked their lives to bring faith and hope to one of the darkest and most devastating periods of American history.



CWRT Website QR Code