

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



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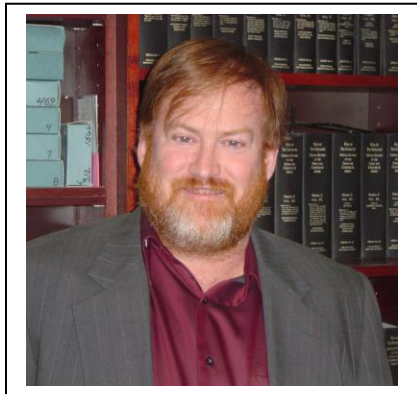
838th REGULAR MEETING, Friday, June 13th, 2025

The Nevins-Freeman Award Address

Dave Powell on

The Atlanta Campaign: Missed Opportunities

**Live/Zoom Meeting. Time: June 13th, 2025, 07:30 PM CST.
Zoom Option ID 845 3227 1496; No Passcode needed**



"I've got Joe Johnston Dead!" Or so Sherman is said to have exclaimed upon hearing that James B. McPherson had seized Resaca. Famously, that turned out not to be true, one of the great "lost opportunities" of the entire war. But in fact, there were other such turning points in the first month of the campaign, each perhaps more significant than Resaca. On May 16, Sherman's armies stumbled crossing the Oostenaula River, offering Johnston a chance to damage one or more of the Federal corps; and at Dallas, McPherson hesitated

again when facing just a single small Confederate division. What would have happened if either of these moments had gone differently?

David A. Powell is a graduate of the Virginia Military Institute (1983) with a BA in history. He has published numerous articles in various magazines, and more than fifteen historical simulations of different battles. For many years, David's focus was on the epic battle of Chickamauga, and he is nationally recognized for his tours of that important battlefield. The result of that study are five books, the final volume being The

Chickamauga Campaign: Barren Victory (2016). Subsequently, he has turned to the study of the battles for Chattanooga. Battle Above the Clouds, concerning the Battle of Lookout Mountain, was published in June of 2017. Decisions at Chickamauga followed in 2018. Two more books, "All Hell Can't Stop Them" (on Missionary Ridge) and Union Command Failure in the Shenandoah Valley both appeared in 2019. More recently The Tullahoma Campaign (co-authored with Eric Wittenberg) and Grant at Chattanooga, were published in 2020. Decisions at Shiloh appeared in 2023, and he is now hard at work on The Atlanta Campaign, a projected multi-volume study. Volume One of Atlanta appeared in July, 2024, with Volume Two to follow in 2025. David, his wife Anne, and their trio of bloodhounds live and work in the northwest suburbs of Chicago, Illinois.

Battlefield Preservation

Dear ____:

As we conclude the American Battlefield Trust's fifth annual Victory Week, we celebrate our latest round of successfully completed campaigns and we thank you. It's been another tremendous year and we couldn't have done it without you.

[Our 2025 Victory Week roster](#) includes the first-ever preserved ground at Dinwiddie Court House and nearly 100 acres saved at both Trevilian Station and Brice's Cross Roads.

These accomplishments speak volumes to the many layers of work that each preservation project entails. Each victory is a product of several helping hands working together to complete the following:

- * Research and confirm the historic actions that took place on the pinpointed soil
- * Work with landowners on a mutually-acceptable preservation transaction
- * Consult with local partner groups and decision-makers
- * Identify all possible funding sources
- * Share preservation opportunities with essential supporters like yourself

When reading about each of these victories, please know that they are your victories, too! With our sincerest gratitude, we recognize that you have played an integral part in helping us reach a remarkable milestone in our preservation journey: nearly 60,000 acres of history, spread across 25 states, now saved forever. What an accomplishment! We can't thank you enough.

'Til the battle is won.

May Presentation

By Mark Matranga

Steve T. Phan presented at the 837th Regular Meeting of The Civil War Round Table on May 9, 2025, on “Asian and Pacific Islanders in the Civil War.” Phan, Park Ranger and Chief of Interpretation at Camp Nelson National Monument, has developed a special interest in the participation of this often-forgotten group who, while not very large, joined the armies of both Union and Confederacy and who fought for citizenship and human rights in a postwar era of exclusion and expulsion.

The largest group of Asians, the Chinese, lived on the West Coast but a small number, approximately 200, lived in the New York City area. Of these, there were several notable individuals who enlisted in the Union army, the most prominent being Joseph Pierce who served with the 14th Connecticut Infantry Regiment. Born in Guangdong Province, China, in 1842, he was brought to America by a ship captain, Amos Peck, in 1853. It was reported that he had been sold to the captain; he came by his name thanks to Franklin Pierce, president at the time.

Unlike most Chinese who in the racialized environment of the time, Pierce was listed as white, perhaps due to his having enlisted along with his peers from a New England town. The 14th Connecticut was mustered in on July 26, 1862, and saw action at Antietam where Pierce was injured. After recovering, he returned to the regiment to fight at Chancellorsville and Gettysburg. Promoted to corporal in November 1863, he mustered out in June 1865. Pierce eventually received a pension and married; he died in 1916 in Connecticut. It is said that Pierce achieved the highest rank of any Chinese in the Union army.

Edward Day Cohota, born in Shanghai in 1843 took his name from the ship which brought him to America, the *Cahota*. He lived with the ship's captain's family in Gloucester, Massachusetts where he trained to be a sailor. He enlisted with the 23rd Massachusetts Infantry in February 1864, seeing action at Cold Harbor. He was discharged in June 1865, but unable to find work, re-enlisted, and served an additional 30 years at various posts throughout the West. He married and settled in Nebraska where he retired in 1895. He opened a restaurant in Nebraska and eventually retired to a veteran's home in Hot Springs, North Dakota, where he died in 1935. Ironically, despite his service he was denied citizenship due to the Chinese Exclusion Act. He was granted a pension, however.

Another Chinese veteran, Thomas Sylvanus, was born in Hong Kong and brought to the United States in the 1850s. He joined the 81st Pennsylvania Regiment at age 16 and was discharged after being partially blinded in battle. Undeterred, he rejoined the service in the 42nd New York Infantry, serving with distinction at Spotsylvania and Cold Harbor. Captured at Petersburg in June 1864, he was imprisoned at Andersonville and eventually released and discharged in May 1866.

In all, some 200 Asians served the Union cause, many in the navy; there were 23 Asian sailors aboard Federal ships at Fort Fisher, for example. But not all Asians fought for the Union, some served in the Confederate army. Some joined mixed nationality units formed in Louisiana – these individuals may have been Filipinos. Phan related the story of Siamese twins Chang and Eng, brought to the United States by Barnum and Bailey Circus, who settled in North Carolina where they married white women, became prosperous farmers and fathered 22 children. Two of them, sons Christopher and Stephen, fought for the Confederacy.

Complicating matters was that the 1860 census provided for three classifications only: white, black, and mulatto. This prompted some Chinese and other Asians to join Colored Regiments as they oftentimes would not be classified as 'white,' thus making the search for Asian participation in the war a difficult project. More tragically for Asian soldiers, and especially Chinese, was the difficulty they faced following the war. Despite legislation (the Militia Act of 1862) granting citizenship for serving, the Naturalization Act of 1790 (only whites could be naturalized) and the Exclusion Act of 1882 prohibited their naturalization. Chinese and Asian soldiers struggled to obtain their pensions.

This is perhaps why we see Joseph Pierce identifying as 'Japanese' on postwar census reports. Stephan Phan offers us an insight into an uncharted area of the Civil War. Chinese soldiers and laborers who fought the Civil War and built the Central Pacific were expendable once those projects were complete. Their struggle for recognition and veteran's rights is a story that deserves telling.



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.

June 13th, noon at the **Kenosha Civil War Museum**, Michael T. Sullivan presents “The Congdon Brothers and Significant Others: Their Civil War Times”

July 11th, William Griffing presents “Spared and Shared: Saving History from the American Civil War”

August 8th, Dr. Steve Fratt presents “Combat in the American Civil War”

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

June 18th, at the Lake Forest Public Library, **Rob Girardi** will present “The Union Prisoners of War at Camp Douglas”

The Third Annual **Abraham Lincoln Association Summer Symposium** will be held Saturday, June 21, 2025 at the Cantigny Park Visitor Center

The Symposium will begin at 9:00 a.m. and end by Noon. It is free and open to the public but registration is required. Contact Kay Smith, kaysmith.ala@gmail.com to register.

This year’s speakers are well known and outstanding in their chosen symposium topics:

Michael Burlingame – “John Locke Scripps-Lincoln’s First Biographer.”

Guy Fraker – “Young Abraham & Ann Rutledge – a New Salem Infatuation?”

Mark Pohlad – “Abraham Lincoln – the Lawyer and Politician in Chicago.”

Scott Schroeder & David Weigers - “The Lincoln Sculpture Project – A Digital World Tour

More Upcoming Local Civil War Events

June 4th, Kankakee Valley CWRT: Dinner at “Chicago Dough” pizza

June 6th, Northern Illinois CWRT: Bob Presman on "Could the South Have Won the Civil War?"

June 10th, McHenry County CWRT: Bob Presman on "Could the South Have Won the Civil War?"

June 12th, Milwaukee CWRT: Dave Powell on "Lost Opportunities in the Atlanta

Campaign"

June 21st, ALA Symposium at Cantigny

June 17th, Lincoln-Davis CWRT: Dave Powell on "Atlanta to Tullahoma"

June 20th, Salt Creek CWRT: Banquet. Mark Flotow on "Illinois Civil War Soldiers Write About U.S. Grant"

July 7th, Rock Valley CWRT: Dorothy Page Turner on "Songs and Stories of the Underground Railroad"

July 8th, McHenry County CWRT: Mary Rose Filip on "Rockford's Camp Fuller and the 74th Illinois"

July 15th, Lincoln-Davis CWRT: Scott Norrick on "Immigrant Soldiers in the Civil War"

July 15th, Custer SCV Camp: Bruce Allardice, topic TBD

Aug. 4th, Rock Valley CWRT: Amanda Becker on "Turn the Other Cheek: Jefferson Davis' Invitation to Speak at the Winnebago County Fair"

Aug. 12th, McHenry County CWRT: Steve Alban on "The Real Story of Foreign Affairs in the Civil War"

Aug. 19th, Lincoln-Davis CWRT: Alex Rossini on "Calamity at Fredericksburg"

Aug. 28th, South Suburban CWRT: Bruce Allardice on "Aloha Oe: Hawaii and the Civil War"

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

Future Chicago CWRT Meetings

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 currently has no event scheduled for the near future.

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

The Nevins-Freeman Award

In 1974, The Civil War Round Table of Chicago established the Nevins-Freeman Award, and bestows it annually on an individual whose advancement of American Civil War scholarship and support for the Round Table movement warrant special recognition. The award itself is designed as a generous financial donation to a historical preservation project chosen by the recipient.

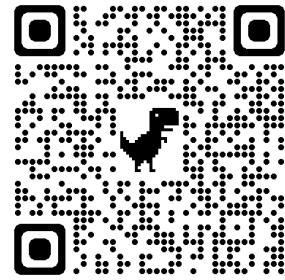
This award is named for two men whose legacies have come to be synonymous with the Civil War era: Allan Nevins, and Douglas Southall Freeman.

A list of past Nevins-Freeman Awardees can be viewed at the CWRT's website.

Shiloh Tour photos, courtesy Mark and Vicki Matranga



Our guide Bjorn at the Stuart Brigade Monument



Bjorn, letting us know where the bodies are buried



At the Corinth visitor Center



Group Photo—lotta happy folks!