

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



Volume LXXXV, Number 2

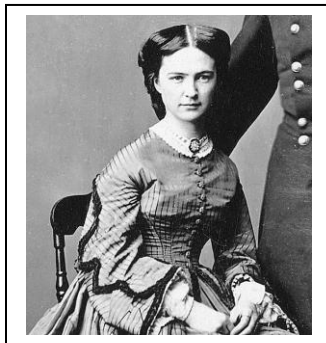
Chicago, Illinois

October 2025

840th REGULAR MEETING, Friday, October 10th, 2025

Kim Harris as *Libby Bacon Custer*

Live Meeting. Time: Oct. 10th, 2025, 07:30 PM CST.



Elizabeth Bacon Custer was an American author and public speaker, and the wife of Brevet Major General George Armstrong Custer, United States Army. She spent most of their marriage in relatively close proximity to him despite his numerous military campaigns in the American Civil

War and subsequent postings on the Great Plains as a commanding officer in the United States Cavalry.

Left nearly destitute in the aftermath of her husband's death, she became an outspoken advocate for his legacy through her popular books and lectures. Largely as a result of her decades of campaigning on his behalf, General Custer's iconic image as the gallant fallen hero amid the glory of Custer's Last Stand was a canon of American history for almost a century after his death.

Kim Harris is an accomplished first-person portrayer with over 15 years' experience, having presented over twenty local and national historical characters, from California to Bronxville, NY, at various venues including Genoa Cowboy Festival, Pipers Opera House, the Gold Hill Hotel and The Lake Tahoe Chautauqua Festival. She is the owner of Western History ALIVE! where she presents the lives of many famous and infamous historical figures.

Kim Harris was born and raised at Donner Lake, California, growing up immersed in the history of our West. She enjoys not only sharing what she has learned about our history, but continuously learning from those that have lived it themselves.

Battlefield Preservation

Dear ____:

Right now, we have an unprecedented chance to save 27.5 acres at Manassas, Bull Run, and Williamsburg — battlefields where America's Civil War generals first earned their names.

These four tracts of land are valued at over **\$5 million**, but thanks to federal and state preservation grants and a generous donor's \$25,000 gift, we're already nearly across the finish line. To complete this effort, we need to raise just \$155,295.

And here's the extraordinary part: every gift is multiplied 34-to-1.

- A \$50 donation saves \$1,700 worth of battlefield land.
- A \$100 donation saves \$3,400.
- A \$500 donation saves \$17,000.

But this opportunity won't last....

Read David Duncaon's full letter at <https://www.battlefields.org/sites/default/files/2025-09/pressidents-letter-25ABTA92.pdf?ms=home>

'Til the battle is won.

David Duncan, President, American Battlefield Trust

September Presentation

By Mark Matranga

On September 12, 2025, the 839th Regular meeting of The Civil War Round Table featured *Overlooked and Underappreciated: General Dan Butterfield*, wherein James Pula burnished the reputation of "the fightingest general" from New York State during the War of the Rebellion. Butterfield has been known best for introducing "Taps" into our military tradition and for having developed distinctive corps badges for the Army of

the Potomac, later adopted throughout the army. But Butterfield achieved an impressive record as a combat commander during campaigns prior to these events, on the Peninsula, during the Seven Days, and at Second Manassas.

Butterfield was born in 1831 into a wealthy and prominent upstate New York family, his father being a co-founder of the first telegraph company and American Express. Graduating from Union College in Schenectady, NY, at age 18 and too young to practice law, he received another education traveling when he was introduced to slavery. Ultimately, he began work with his father's company in New York City. While there, he joined the 71st New York militia regiment. After Fort Sumter, he transferred to the 12th New York Volunteer Infantry as its colonel. He fought at First Manassas, after which he was sent to the Shenandoah Valley where he commanded a brigade and gained promotion to brigadier general. Over the winter of 1861-62, he wrote the Army field manual, *Camp and Outpost Duty for Infantry*, which General Hooker adopted for the Army of the Potomac and eventually for the western armies as well.

Butterfield distinguished himself during the Peninsula Campaign, especially at Gaines Mill where his brigade fought off successive attacks. During this engagement, he seized the flag of the 83rd Pennsylvania and rallied the regiment, an act which brought him the Medal of Honor postwar (1892). He repeated this at Malvern Hill, taking the flag of the Irish Brigade and rallying those troops. Corps commander General Fitz John Porter commended Butterfield; William Powell, Fifth Corps historian, noted his "personal gallantry." Later, while at Harrison's Landing, he worked with bugler Norton, rearranging notes to create "Taps." After being transferred to Pope's army at Manassas, he commanded a division and executed what General Sykes called a "gallant charge" albeit one which was repulsed.

With Porter facing court martial, Butterfield was placed in command of V Corps during the Fredericksburg campaign. Apparently, Butterfield extracted a promise from General Burnside that this would be permanent; notwithstanding this, he was replaced by General Meade who made it known to the high command that he was the ranking officer. At Fredericksburg Butterfield performed with skill, overseeing the withdrawal of the army over the Rappahannock at night. General Hooker, impressed, named Butterfield his chief of staff for the Chancellorsville Campaign, which led to his promotion to Major General in March 1863; in that role he coordinated with Colonel Sharpe of the newly formed Bureau of Military Information. When Meade assumed command he retained Butterfield as Warren, Humphreys, and Seth Williams all thought Butterfield more familiar with army operations and could better serve the new commander. But Meade did not trust Butterfield, a Hooker supporter.

Butterfield was injured at Gettysburg and left the army. Meade was complimentary but replaced him, a move Butterfield resented. However, when Hooker took the XI and XII Corps west to help relieve Chattanooga, he reprised Butterfield's position as chief of

staff; after that, he received a division command for the Atlanta campaign when he performed well but was forced to take leave due to illness. Pula claimed that Butterfield was responsible for Hooker's rapid movement west, that he "made this happen;" however, it should be noted that the logistics underpinning this achievement was primarily the work of railroad men Daniel McCallum, John Garrett, and William Prescott Smith.

Forced into an extended convalesce, Butterfield did not return to active combat duty for the rest of the war. But General Thomas had recommended him for corps command and General Sherman admired him as "zealous" and "full of valor." Before war's end he was breveted major general. He did not resign from service until March 1870 and later led the Grand Army of the Republic. He made both personal contributions and worked to raise substantial sums to erect the 12th/44th New York Monument on Little Round Top. He also paid for the V Corps monument at Fredericksburg. A monument to him was erected on Riverside Drive in New York in 1918.

In all, Butterfield had a very commendable war record. Unfortunately, he supported Dan Sickles who, seeking to vindicate his performance and to return to corps command, fashioned himself the hero of Gettysburg when Meade intended to retreat. It is not the place here to resolve the Meade-Sickles controversy, but it can be said that Butterfield prevaricated in his testimony before the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War. He (with others) had an obvious animus against Meade and was by Pula's own words a "Hooker favorite." The claim that he was permanently entitled to corps command was odd: He was outranked by Meade, a West Point graduate.

The verdict of history? Meade was the victor at Gettysburg who clearly intended to fight at Gettysburg well before mid-afternoon on July 2 when Butterfield maintained he was ordered to draft a 'contingent' plan for retreat, an order that allegedly never issued due to Longstreet's attack. Both Gibbon and Hunt were adamant that Meade intended to stay and fight, and his communications to General Halleck on July 2 after his arrival at Gettysburg dispel the notion that he intended not fight that day. Coddington (*Gettysburg, A Study in Command*) and Harry Pfanz (*Gettysburg, the Second Day*) both provide incisive analysis on this topic. Also, Bruce Tapp (*Over Lincoln's Shoulder*) mentions the Committee suspected Meade due to his detachment from partisan politics. Butterfield's contributions to the war effort were substantial but indeed overlooked, perhaps due to his involvement in political intrigue. One ponders whether this may have been a self-inflicted wound.



BULLETIN BOARD

Our in-person meetings are currently held at:

Blossom Cafe

8349 West Lawrence, Chicago

Parking at the Blossom Cafe is FREE

Dinner \$50.00 Members and Non- Members

Cocktails at 5:30, Dinner at 6:30

Presentation only is \$10 per person.

The Kenosha Civil War Museum will feature Father **Bob Miller** on October 10th, presenting on "From Rome to Appomattox: A History of Catholic Civil War Chaplains." The event is part of their Friday lunchbox series and will run from noon to one.

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

October 30th, at the Prospect Heights Book Club, **Bruce Allardice** will present "Charles Gunther: Mississippi River Confederate." He will also present "The First Baseball World Series" to the Elmhurst History Museum, Oct. 26th.

There is currently an exhibit on "Camp Douglas" at the Elk Grove Historical Museum.

More Upcoming Local Civil War Events

Oct. 1st, Kankakee Valley CWRT: Kevin Connally on "Civil War Ghost Stories"

Oct. 3rd, Northern Illinois CWRT: **Jerry Allen** on "General James Steedman"

Oct. 6th, Rock Valley CWRT: TBA

Oct. 8th, McHenry County CWRT: TBA

Oct. 9th, Milwaukee CWRT: Kim Harris as "Libby Custer"

Oct. 11th, Stellwagen Farm, Orland Park: Civil War encampment

Oct. 14th, Southwest Michigan CWRT: Brian Dirck on "Abraham Lincoln and Death"

Oct. 18th, Salt Creek CWRT: Annual Book Sale. Father **Bob Miller** on "From Rome to Appomattox: Military Chaplains Throughout History"

Oct. 19th, Northwest Indiana CWRT: Serena Ard on "The Underground Railroad in Northwest Indiana"

Oct. 21st, Lincoln-Davis CWRT: Frank Garmon on "A Civil War Con Artist"

Oct. 25th, South Suburban CWRT: Kevin Connelly on "Civil War Ghost Stories"

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

Future Chicago CWRT Meetings

Nov. 14th: Chris Kolakowski on "Civil War to World War: Simon Bolivar Buckner Sr. and Jr."

Dec. 12th: Brian Jordan on "Marching Home: Union Veterans and Their Unending Civil War"

Jan. 9th, 2026: Guy Fraker on "Lincoln the Lawyer"

Feb. 13th: Keith Bohannon on "Wheeler's Cavalry in the Atlanta Campaign"

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

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

May 12th: Chris Mackowski on TBA

June 12th: Alex Rossino on "Confederate Plans for Maryland"

The **Abraham Lincoln Book Shop's** "House Divided" series will feature author (and Nevins Freeman Award Winner) Dave Powell speaking on his latest book, *The Atlanta Campaign: Volume 2: From the Etowah River to Kennesaw Mountain, May 20–June 27, 1864*. This free program will be broadcast starting at 3:30 CST October 9th. On October 23rd Anne Marshall will be interviewed on her new biography of *Cassius Clay*, Lincoln's Kentucky ally.

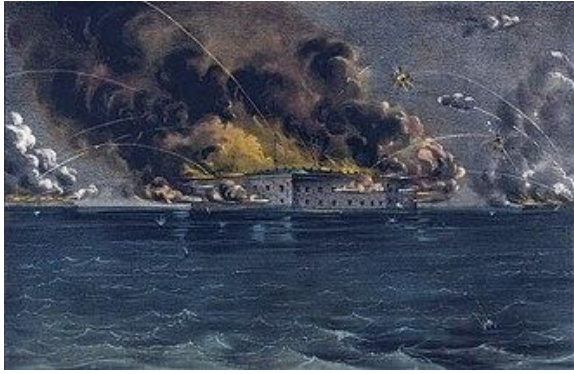
For more, visit <https://alincolnbookshop.com/>

The 2026 Battlefield Tour

Mark your calendar: April 29-May 2, 2026, Charleston/Savannah. These beautiful tourist locations have a great Civil War history. Charleston Harbor's Fort Sumter is where the war started! Our CWRT last visited in 1995, and since then the Hunley Museum and lots of great Civil War venues have opened.

We encourage people to use this tour as the core of a vacation—spend a few days extra down there, in weather that's got to be better than Chicago's!

Details to come.



Fort Sumter bombardment



CSS Hunley

Historian **Donald Pfanz** died in his home on Sept. 2 from brain cancer. After college he made his career with the National Park Service, serving for 32 years at Petersburg Battlefield Park, Fort Sumter National Monument, and Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania County National Military Park. In the latter assignment, he helped organize and execute the annual Chatham Concert Series, National Cemetery Luminaria, and Memorial Day Program.

An avid preservationist, Pfanz was a founder of The Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites (now The American Battlefield Trust). He also wrote 10 books on key people and places of the Civil War, including *Clara Barton's Civil War*, *Richard S. Ewell: A Soldier's Life*, *War So Terrible: A Popular History of the Battle of Fredericksburg*, and *Spotsylvania National Military Park and Fredericksburg: A Comprehensive Civil War Guide*.

He presented to our CWRT in 1985 on "The 11th Corps at Chancellorsville."

No Zoom Simulcast for October

This presentation being “living history,” there will be no zoom simulcast.

October Meetings from the Past:

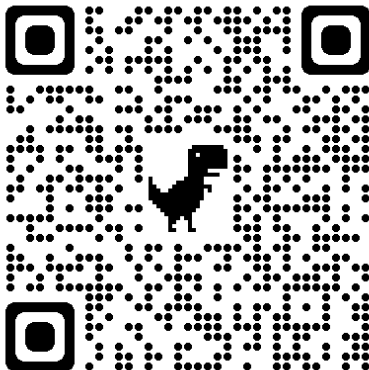
2020--Stuart Sanders on “The Battle of Perryville”

2015—Dennis Frye on “John Brown”

2010--Earl Hess on “Soldier Life in the Trenches at Petersburg”

2005—Ed Bears on “The Most Forgotten, Misunderstood & Least Appreciated Civil War Battles and Soldiers”

1985—Kent M. Brown on “Alonzo Cushing at Gettysburg”



CWRT link