



# THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



Volume LXXXV, Number 7

Chicago, Illinois

March 2026

845th REGULAR MEETING, Friday, March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2026

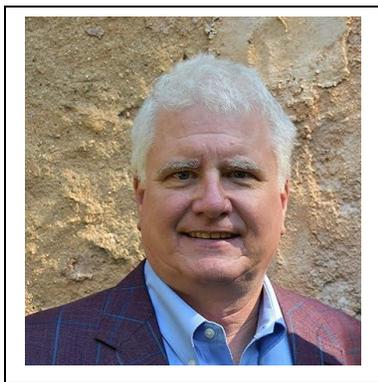
 **REMINDER: Send your Battlefield Tour Reservation in ASAP!**

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## Cliff Roberts on

### *Castle Pinckney and the Confederate Defense of Charleston Harbor*

**Live Meeting. Time: Mar. 13th, 2026, 07:30 PM CST.**



Abraham Lincoln considered the capture of Charleston, where the Civil War formally began, as a crippling blow to Rebel blockade running as well as an emphatic statement of Union success. Despite repeated operations by both the Federal army and navy, and a 545-day bombardment, which is still considered the longest siege in American history, the old city did not surrender until the closing weeks of the war. Castle Pinckney is the oldest fortification still standing in the Charleston Harbor and its central location made it an important piece of P.G.T.

Beauregard's "Circles of Fire."

W. Clifford Roberts graduated from Vanderbilt University in 1981 with a BA in Southern History. He is the author of three books and numerous magazine articles. Cliff Roberts

is the author of Holding Charleston by the Bridle: Castle Pinckney and the Civil War, which was published by Savis Beatie in the fall of 2024. He is currently the president of the Fort Sumter Civil War Round Table and the vice president of the Friends of the Charleston National Parks. He lives in downtown Charleston with his wife Vicki and dog Hashbrown.

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## Battlefield Preservation

Today, 141 acres of hallowed Civil War land at Wilson's Creek, Shiloh, and Bentonville are at risk of being swallowed by development. These are not symbolic places — they are real landscapes where the course of the war turned, where commanders fell, and where soldiers fought and died.

**If this land is lost, *it could be lost forever.***

[We have a rare and powerful opportunity to protect 141 acres](#) — land spanning three different years of the war and three pivotal moments in the Western Theater. Together, these sites tell a story of chaos, courage, sacrifice, and change that cannot be fully understood from books alone.

What makes this moment extraordinary is how close we are to success: the total value of the land exceeds \$3.2 million, but thanks to state and federal grants and committed preservation partners, only \$170,500 remains to be raised. Even more remarkable: [every dollar you give is matched \\$19 to \\$1, multiplying your impact far beyond a single gift.](#)

That means a contribution today doesn't just help — it moves the needle. It turns urgency into action and ensures we can act *before developers do.*

'Til the battle is won,

**David N. Duncan**, President, American Battlefield Trust

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## February Presentation

By Mark Matranga

**Keith Bohannon** provided The Civil War Round Table an informative view of “Joseph Wheeler’s Cavalry in the Atlanta Campaign” at its 844<sup>th</sup> Regular Meeting on February 13, 2026. Bohannon, professor at the University of West Georgia and author of two books, portrayed Wheeler as a controversial but fascinating figure “then and now” as ‘Fighting Joe’ has generated divergent opinions from historians over time as well as criticism from contemporaries in service.

Born in Augusta, Georgia on September 10, 1836, Wheeler graduated from West Point on July 1, 1859, nineteenth (of 22) in his class. After cavalry training at Carlisle Barracks, he was assigned to the Mounted Rifles Regiment in New Mexico Territory in June 1860. He led the 19<sup>th</sup> Alabama Infantry at Shiloh, covering the retreat from that battle and from Corinth in June 1862. Transferred to a cavalry brigade in September, he commanded the rearguard force after Perryville in October, which led to promotion to Brigadier and command of the Cavalry Corps.

Wheeler participated in all major actions of the Army of Tennessee in Middle Tennessee and was promoted to Major General effective January 1863. He conducted a successful raid behind enemy lines prior to Stones River, forming the rearguard after that battle and in the Tullahoma Campaign. He likewise undertook an extensive raid of Union supply lines in the aftermath of the battle of Chickamauga and later covered the Confederate retreat following the debacle at Missionary Ridge in November 1863.

When the Atlanta Campaign began, Wheeler’s strength was reported to be 8,500, however, actual effectives were probably 2,400. This was because war was hard on horseflesh and southern horsemen had to supply their own mounts; also, the cavalry was posted across an area over 80 miles from Dalton, Georgia to Oxford, Alabama in order to disperse sources of fodder. In preparing for this campaign, Wheeler worked on improving discipline and produced a revised cavalry tactics manual. He outlined the cavalry’s role as: 1) exercising a powerful influence over a campaign, spreading terror over a wide swath of territory, carrying off convoys and rendering the enemy’s communications difficult; 2) using cavalry as mounted riflemen, using horses to reach the point of attack where troops would be utilized as light infantry; 3) covering retreats; 4) obstructing the enemy’s advance.

Wheeler demonstrated the latter objective in February 1864 at Tunnel Hill when he thwarted an initial attempt to move on Confederate lines at Dalton. When the campaign began in earnest in May, his cavalry protected the advance on Rocky Face Ridge and the Western & Atlantic Railroad, the army’s supply lifeline. Bohannon pointed out that Wheeler neglected to properly guard Snake Creek Gap; only General McPherson’s hesitation saved the army from disastrous consequences should Union forces have reached the railroad at Resaca. As new army commander Joe Johnston fell back, Wheeler’s troops guarded the army’s flanks, fighting in trenches and covering its retreat.

His forces were augmented when Red Jackson arrived with Polk's Corps. They fought dismounted against Howard's large force at Pickett's Mill, and at the Battle of Atlanta again dismounted, in trenches, repulsing McPherson's attacks.

Throughout this time Wheeler was not satisfied, advocating for a more aggressive role of raiding, "constantly harassing flanks and rear" of the enemy. He desired a long raid to interdict the Western & Atlantic and destroy the Union supply line north to the Ohio River. Johnston disagreed. Before Wheeler could obtain permission for this project, Sherman sent Generals Stoneman and McCook south to encircle Atlanta and cut the remaining railroads supplying Atlanta, a bad idea according to Bohannon. This resulted in total failure, with Wheeler's cavalry capturing Stoneman near Macon and fighting and winning a major battle at Brown's Mill near Newnan with McCook. This was Wheeler's great triumph: Union cavalry was decimated, almost half its force killed, wounded or captured. Hood, now in command, allowed Wheeler to go off on a frolic of his own, to north Georgia, east Tennessee and southwest Virginia where he accomplished little by the beginning of September except to deplete his force.

Regarding Wheeler's reputation Bohannon cited Richard McMurry who considered him "utterly irresponsible in major operations," and Dave Powell, who found Wheeler a "poor disciplinarian, a bad administrator, and a miserable tactician." In contrast, Albert Castel thought him a capable cavalry leader, albeit one who had problems with discipline and who made exaggerated claims of success. He was also criticized by contemporaries Generals D.H. Hill and Beauregard for lack of discipline in his command. Wheeler was no Forrest or Stuart, but he excelled in screening army movements, supporting infantry in battle, covering retreats and protecting the army's flanks.

And as Bohannon astutely observes, Wheeler retained the confidence of successive commanders of the Army of Tennessee from 1862 until the end of the war. No small feat.



## BULLETIN BOARD

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*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

Dinner choices are Grilled Salmon or Rigatoni

Primavera. [dinnerreservations@cwrt.org](mailto:dinnerreservations@cwrt.org)

The Kenosha Civil War Museum will feature **Rachel Melton** on March 13<sup>th</sup>, presenting on “From Camp Douglas to Vicksburg: The Civil War Letters of William J. Kennedy, 55th Illinois Infantry, 1861-1863.” The event is part of their Friday lunchbox series and will run from noon to one.

The Museum is also partnering with Carthage College for its annual the Lincoln Symposium, taking place this year on **Friday, April 24 and Saturday, April 25**. We are excited to once again offer a lineup of outstanding speakers and timely discussions.

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

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On March 4 **Rob Girardi** will speak on “‘The Very Spirit of War.’ General John A. Logan” to the Kankakee Valley CWRT. On March 10<sup>th</sup> he will present “Civil War Engineers” to the Waukesha CWRT.

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## More Upcoming Local Civil War Events

Mar. 6th, Northern Illinois CWRT: Civil War Trivia Game

Mar. 8th, Northwest Indiana CWRT: Bruce Allardice on "Aloha Oe! Hawaii and the Civil War"

Mar. 10th, Southwest Michigan CWRT: Michael Stroud on "Co. K of the 1st Michigan Sharpshooters"

Mar. 12th, Milwaukee CWRT: Clifford Roberts on "Castle Pinckney and the Siege of Charleston"

Mar. 17th, Lincoln-Davis CWRT: James Pula on "Dan Butterfield"

Mar. 19th, McHenry County CWRT: Charlie Banks on "The Battle of South Mountain"

Mar. 21st, Salt Creek CWRT: Ed Urban on "The Murder of General Earl Van Dorn"

Mar. 26th, South Suburban CWRT: Bruce Allardice on "Damn the Torpedoes! Hi-Tech Rebs and their Infernal Machines"

Apr. 1st, Kankakee Valley CWRT: Gordon Ramsey on "Hot Air Balloons at the Beginning of the Civil War"

Apr. 3rd, Northern Illinois CWRT: Laurie Schiller on "U.S. Cavalry"

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

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## Future Chicago CWRT Meetings

**Apr. 10th:** Wayne Motts, The Nevins-Freeman Address  
**May 12th:** Chris Mackowski on “A Tempest of Iron and Lead: The Battle of Spotsylvania Court House”  
**June 12th:** Alex Rossino on “Confederate Plans for Maryland”  
**Sept. 11th:** James Marten on “The Iron Brigade”  
**Oct. 9th:** Ron White on “Joshua Chamberlain”  
**Nov. 13th:** Father Bob Miller, topic TBA  
**Dec. 11th:** Stuart Dempsey, topic TBA  
**Jan. 8th, 2027:** Dan Masters, topic TBA  
**Feb. 12th:** Rob Girardi, topic TBA  
**March 12th:** Doug Dammann, Nevins-Freeman Address  
**Apr. 9th:** Dave Powell, topic TBA  
**May 14th:** Caroline Janney, topic TBA  
**June 11th:** Kevin Donovan, topic TBA

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The **Abraham Lincoln Book Shop** will have Matthew Pinsker on to discuss his new book on Lincoln as politician: *Boss Lincoln: The Partisan Life of Abraham Lincoln*. The event will be held online Mar. 5<sup>th</sup> at 3:30 pm CST.

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

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## 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’re HQ’d at the **Hampton Inn, Charleston Airport**. See the tour registration form and tour Itinerary attached to this newsletter.

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We are asking members to donate to our CWRT’s **Ed Bearss Award**, which provides money for battlefield preservation.

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### March Meetings from the Past:

2021 (5 years ago)—Gregg Biggs presented “Logistics of the Atlanta Campaign”

2016 (10 years ago)—Bruce Kraig on “Why the Civil War Made our Modern Foods”

2001 (25 years ago)—Mark Bradley on “The Surrender in North Carolina”

1941 (75 years ago)—Otto Eisenschiml on “Civil War Battlefields I have Visited”

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## **Recommended Reading Bibliography: Charleston- Savannah Tour**

[Siege of Charleston, 1861-1865](#) (1970) by E. Milby Burton

**Thunder in the Harbor: Fort Sumter and the Civil War** by Richard Hatcher

**Confederate Charleston: An Illustrated History of the City and the People During the Civil War**, By Robert N. Rosen

**Holding Charleston by the Bridle: Castle Pinckney and the Civil War** by Roberts and Locke

**Allegiance: Fort Sumter, Charleston, and the Beginning of the Civil War**, By David Detzer

**Hidden History of Civil War Charleston**, By Margaret Middleton Rivers Eastman

**Secessionville: Assault on Charleston** by Patrick Brennan

**Sumter. The First Day of the Civil War** by Robert Hendrickson

Brian Hicks, **Sea of Darkness: Unraveling the Mysteries of the HL Hunley**

Tom Chaffin, **The HL Hunley. The Secret Hope of the Confederacy**

Duncan, Russell, **Where Death and Glory Meet: Colonel Robert Gould Shaw and the 54th Massachusetts Infantry**

Wise, Stephen R. **Gate of Hell: Campaign for Charleston Harbor, 1863**

Stephen R. Wise, **Lifeline of the Confederacy: Blockade Running During the Civil War**

Derek Smith, **Civil War Savannah**

Schiller, Herbert M., **Sumter is Avenged! The Siege & Reduction of Fort Pulaski.**

Emilio, Luis F (1894). **History of the Fifty-Fourth Regiment of Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry 1863–65.**

Durham, Roger S, **Guardian of Savannah - Fort McAllister, Georgia, in the Civil War and Beyond**

Morgan, James A., **Six Miles from Charleston, Five Minutes to Hell: The Battle of Secessionville, June 16, 1862**

