



# THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



Volume LXXXIII, Number 8

Chicago, Illinois

April 2024

825th REGULAR MEETING, Friday, April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2024

## A. Wilson Greene on

# ***"Opening the Cracker Line and Keeping it Open: The Decisive Battles of the Chattanooga Campaign"***

**Live/Zoom Meeting. Time: Apr. 12th, 2024, 07:30 PM CST.  
Zoom Option ID 845 3227 1496; No Passcode needed**



Following the battle of Chickamauga in September 1863, General William S. Rosecrans' Army of the Cumberland retreated into Chattanooga. Braxton Bragg's Army of Tennessee surrounded the city on three sides and laid a quasi-siege for more than a month. Supplies for the Union forces gradually dwindled, reaching crisis level by the third week of October. Rosecrans, who seemed incapable of lifting the siege, gave way to Ulysses S. Grant, who approved a daring plan to open a new line of supply. That plan succeeded on October 27, opening what the Federal soldiers called the "Cracker Line." The Confederates' effort to redeem the situation resulted in one of the Civil War's rare night battles near a railroad junction called

Wauhatchie. Will Greene will argue that these two relatively minor actions decided the outcome of the campaign for Chattanooga and that the famous battles of Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge should have never occurred.

A. Wilson "Will" Greene is a native Chicagoan who grew up in Western Springs and

Wheaton. Following a sixteen-year career with the National Park Service, Greene became the first executive director of the Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites, now the American Battlefield Trust. He then became the founding director of Pamplin Historical Park and the National Museum of the Civil War Soldier. Greene is the author of six books and a dozen published articles and essays dealing with the Civil War. His current project with the University of North Carolina Press is a three-volume history of the Petersburg Campaign. The first volume, A Campaign of Giants, was published in 2018 and Volume 2 is due out early in 2025. Greene was the recipient of the Nevins-Freeman Award in 2012. Greene now lives in Walden, Tennessee, hard by the Anderson Pike, about which he will speak at our meeting.

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## Battlefield Preservation

As you may know, there is a **key missing piece in the heart of the battlefield at Franklin, Tennessee**: A near-acre tract of land with a single-story, contemporary warehouse.

It is the only obstacle preventing visitors from walking the final quarter mile of the Confederates' desperate charge against the Union earthworks. Help us secure this important tract.

Securing this tract of land, is an act that will allow future generations to truly feel a sense of what happened in "Bloody Franklin" on that fateful day, walking on the land that witnessed some of the most desperate hours of the entire Civil War.

**Please donate today to help secure this critical tract of battlefield land at Franklin, Tennessee.** Any amount you can donate to this effort will be matched 50-to-1 toward this historic battlefield completion effort.

'Til the battle is won,  
American Battlefield Trust

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## March Presentation

By Mark Matranga

Chris Bryan spoke to The Civil War Round Table at its 825<sup>th</sup> Regular Meeting on March 8, 2024, on *The Union XII Corps*, a discussion of this unit and its role in the 1862 Maryland Campaign and the Battle of Cedar Mountain. The corps was organized only a

short time before the armies crossed the Potomac into Maryland following Second Manassas. Perhaps because of this and because the actions in the Cornfield and along the Hagerstown Pike and in the West Woods dominate most narratives of Antietam, the XII Corps' contribution to that battle is largely overlooked. Bryan argues, however, that it made material progress toward the major goal of the army that day.

The XII Corps of the Army of the Potomac was formed on September 12, 1862, from what had been the II Corps, Army of Virginia (formerly V Corps, Army of the Potomac). II Corps, formed June 26, 1862, retreated to Washington after John Pope's command was routed at Second Manassas at the end of August. The corps under Banks fought well at Cedar Mountain on August 8, when it suffered significant casualties. Some units were hard hit. For example, the 28<sup>th</sup> New York lost 17 officers dead, wounded or missing, leaving a captain in command of the regiment, with only 68 men present for duty at Antietam. After Cedar Mountain, the corps was so used up that Pope considered it unfit and relegated it to guarding trains in what became the rear of the pending battle at Manassas. During the retreat to Washington, the corps was demoralized, one soldier saying this was "...the darkest day and the darkest hour in our regimental history."

The newly designated XII Corps under General Mansfield entered Maryland as the smallest in the Army of the Potomac (approximately 7,200), with two divisions led by B.G. Alpheus Williams and B.G. George Greene. Both divisions had issues involving low morale and lack of confidence in leadership. In addition, the 1<sup>st</sup> Division under Williams had a surfeit of new regiments while Greene's division was in poor condition. Due in part to these problems XII Corps trailed its sister units on the National Road to South Mountain and was not engaged at Turner's Gap on September 14. The next day it crossed the mountain to Boonsboro and proceeded to Keedysville, marching over Antietam Creek in the dark the night of September 16-17. Up at dawn and none too organized, the corps marched to the Samuel Poffenberger farm woods during the early morning fight between I Corps forces under Doubleday and Ricketts and Confederate units under J.R. Jones/Lawton; later, the corps moved down the Smoketown Road during Hood's counterattack in the Cornfield.

Eventually, XII Corps "stumbled" into action at about 7:30 a.m., a deployment which produced results when Crawford's Brigade moved forward during Hood's retreat from the Cornfield. Before 9 o'clock, Gordon's, Tyndale's and Stainrook's Brigades successfully assaulted Colquitt along the Smoketown Road and in the East Woods and Cornfield, respectively. At about the same time, after Sedgwick's Division retreated from the West Woods, the 125<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania (Crawford) moved into the woods near the Dunker Church. A short time later, Tyndale/Stainrook, whose brigades had been attacked as they approached the church, secured that position and moved into the West Woods. Unfortunately, at approximately 8 a.m., General Mansfield was mortally wounded near the East Woods while placing troops for battle.

After further furious fighting with units under Early and Ransom lasting past the noon hour, Greene's forces were struck by flanking counterattacks, and eventually pulled back to the Mumma Farm. Although other Federal units fought along Hagerstown Pike, none could secure it. Only the XII Corps, Bryan argues, penetrated that most vital position in the Confederate line which, if reinforced, could have put Lee's army in serious jeopardy. The remaining two II Corps divisions failed to follow Sedgwick toward the Turnpike but rather angled toward the Sunken Road. Without their help, and with ammunition running low, Greene could not sustain his hold on the Dunker Church plateau and the West Woods.

The XII Corps' service continued after Antietam, its morale improved. But historian's seemingly diminish XII Corps' effort at Antietam; little attention is paid to the penetration into the West Woods beyond the church. The Cornfield, Sunken Road, Burnside Bridge, all iconic images, but Greene's brigades, alone fighting off multiple assaults for several hours the morning of September 17, 1862, suffering severe casualties, inflicting even more on their adversaries, where were they? Chris Bryan will have us study the maps to see for ourselves, and learn.



## 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 \$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:

On April 15th, from 6:30-8:00 p.m., Doug Dammann will discuss Edward Achorn's book on the 1860 presidential nomination, [The Lincoln Miracle](#).

On Friday, April 12<sup>th</sup> at noon, Steve Worsham will present "Dwight L. Moody and the Civil War"

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

Carthage College will hold their Third Annual **Abraham Lincoln symposium** April 25-26.

**Rob Girardi** is speaking April 7<sup>th</sup> at the Galena Historical Society on “John Eugene Smith, Galena’s Forgotten General”

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## **More Upcoming Local Civil War Events**

April 1st, Rock Valley CWRT: Stanley Campbell on "Money and Banking in the Civil War"

April 5th, Northern Illinois CWRT: Larry Hewitt on "Port Hudson in Photos"

April 9th, McHenry County CWRT: Bob Grenier on "Central Florida's Civil War Veterans"

April 9th, Southwest Michigan CWRT: Matt Van Acker on "Lansing and the Civil War"

April 11th, Milwaukee CWRT: Will Greene on "The Cracker Line in the Battle of Chattanooga"

April 13th, Salt Creek CWRT: Diana Dretske on "The Bonds of War: the 96th Illinois"

April 14th, Northwest Indiana CWRT: Dan Van Haften on "Lincoln and the Structure of Reason"

April 16th, Lincoln-Davis CWRT: Father Bob Miller on "Forgotten Victims of Disease at Vicksburg"

April 20th, DuPage Civil War Memorabilia Show

April 25th, South Suburban CWRT: Phil Spaugy on "The 19th Indiana"

May 3rd, Northern Illinois CWRT: Jon Sebastian on "When Draftees Did Their Duty: Four Months in the 51st Illinois Infantry"

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

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## **Future Chicago CWRT Meetings**

**May 10th:** Lynn and Julianne Herman on "The Allegheny Arsenal Explosion"

**June 14th:** Tim Smith (Nevins-Freeman Award) on "Vicksburg"

**Sept. 13th:** Jim Hessler on "Dan Sickles"

**Oct. 11th:** Larry Hewitt on "The Birth of Combat Photography"

**Nov. 8th:** Kent Masterson Brown on TBA

**Dec. 13th:** Jon Sebastian on TBA

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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.

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

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**Reminder**—There's still a few seats left for the **Battlefield Tour of Gettysburg**, April 24-28<sup>th</sup>! Visit <https://chicagocwrt.org/battletour.html> for more!

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### **Some Past CWRT Meetings**

Five Years Ago: Apr. 12<sup>th</sup>, 2019, Brad Gottfried spoke on "Maps of the Chancellorsville Campaign"

Ten Years Ago: April 11, 2014: Scott Bowden on "Last Chance for Victory"

Twenty Years Ago, April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2004: Jim Ogden spoke on "Sherman Targets the War Resources"

For a list of presenters and presentations since 1940, visit [https://chicagocwrt.org/Resources/Chicago\\_CWRT\\_Speakers\\_1940-2017.pdf](https://chicagocwrt.org/Resources/Chicago_CWRT_Speakers_1940-2017.pdf) and <https://chicagocwrt.org/Resources/Speakers2018-24.pdf>

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**Reminder:** CWRT officer elections in May