



# THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



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Chicago, Illinois

February 2026

844th REGULAR MEETING, Friday, February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2026

## Keith Bohannon on Wheeler's Cavalry in the Atlanta Campaign

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



Keith Bohannon will examine General Joe Wheeler's background and the operations of his command from May-September 1864. During much of this time, Wheeler's command guarded the flanks of the army and protected vital railroads from Union cavalry raids. Often his cavalry, dismounted, fought in the lines against Sherman's infantry. Wheeler's decisive defeat of Union cavalry forces during the McCook-Stoneman Raid is arguably the high point of his career.

Dr. Keith Bohannon is Professor of History at the University of West Georgia, where he teaches courses on the Civil War and Reconstruction, the Old South, and Georgia history. He is the co-editor, with Randall Allen, of Campaigning with Old Stonewall in Virginia: The Letters of Ujanirtus Allen, Company F, 21st Regiment, Georgia Volunteer Infantry (LSU Press, 1998), author of The Giles Artillery (Virginia Regimental Series) and is the author of numerous essays, book reviews, and scholarly journal articles. He has appeared on C-Span numerous times. Prior to his appointment to the faculty at West Georgia, Dr. Bohannon worked as an historian, interpreter, and living historian with the National Park Service at multiple Civil War sites.

## Battlefield Preservation

At the Winter Board meeting of the Chicago CWRT, the Battlefield Preservation Committee reported the following donations made since July 1, 1025:

\$3,000 to the American Battlefield Trust, broken down into \$1,500 for the Petersburg Breakthrough, \$1,000 to Georgia Battlefields, and \$500 to Antietam,

A further \$250 was sent to the Verandah-Curlee House in Corinth.

More donations to the ABT and to Georgia Battlefields will be announced shortly.

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## January Presentation

By Mark Matranga

The Civil War Round Table featured **Guy Fraker** on “Lincoln the Lawyer” at its 843<sup>rd</sup> Regular Meeting on January 9, 2026. Fraker, author of *Lincoln’s Ladder to the Presidency: The Eighth Judicial Circuit*, and its valuable companion *Looking for Lincoln in Illinois: A Guide to Lincoln’s Eighth Judicial Circuit*, offered a deep dive into the nature and extent of Lincoln’s practice in the developing central Illinois heartland before the Civil War.

Lincoln came to New Salem in 1832 from the Decatur area upon reaching majority, and began to avidly study law, beginning with Blackstone’s *Commentaries*. He also borrowed books from prominent Springfield attorney John Todd Stuart and began practicing with him in 1837. Fraker pointed out that Lincoln was a politician of sorts even before he became a lawyer, making speeches back in Decatur and making contacts with local politicians who appointed him to positions such as assistant county surveyor and local postmaster.

Stuart brought Lincoln on as a junior partner in 1837 as he needed an associate to handle his burgeoning practice while he served in Congress. Lincoln had little supervision and learned on his own, handling a volume of cases and several high-profile civil and criminal matters. He and Stuart parted company in 1841, largely due to the latter’s political career but the two remained on friendly terms. Lincoln then partnered for three years with Stephen T. Logan, recognized as the finest attorney in central Illinois and perhaps in Illinois.

Logan taught Lincoln the value of preparation. Together they dominated the Sangamon County docket, with cases ranging from divorce to fraud, contract, real property, and

estates. Lincoln became a much improved and more disciplined attorney while under Logan's wing. But their association lasted only three years, until 1844 when Lincoln formed a partnership with William Herndon, who Mary Todd Lincoln intensely disliked. Lincoln now had a junior partner who could manage office affairs and would afford Lincoln time to participate in politics; they remained partners until Lincoln left for Washington in 1861.

Lincoln practiced in the Eighth Judicial Circuit, formed in 1839 and consisting of 14 counties in central Illinois during the height of the circuit in 1847-53: Christian, DeWitt, Logan, Macon, McLean, Sangamon, Tazewell, Champaign, Moultrie, Piatt, Shelby, Woodford, Edgar, and Vermillion (boundaries changed as population grew). Population of the circuit was some 70,000 and covered approximately 10,000 square miles (twice the size of Connecticut), a landscape of tallgrass prairie crosscut by rivers and streams. Not all attorneys travelled to all counties, but Lincoln did, both spring and fall sessions, along with good friend Leonard Swett. Attorneys traveled by carriage in summer and fall when roads were dry; winter and spring required horses as roads were generally soggy.

Fraker connected Lincoln's activity on the circuit to his eventual rise in politics, as he stayed out for entire three-month sessions while others went home. This resulted in his making contacts across the territory, especially in Bloomington where Judge Davis resided. While on circuit, he handled a full range of cases, from collections to partitions, wills and estates. Specifically, there were 85 defamation cases, business related for men, for women their chastity. He handled two cases of first impression: one where a man injured when thrown off a train established vicarious liability of the corporation in Illinois; in the second, he successfully represented a man injured on a city sidewalk, overcoming the City of Springfield's claim of sovereign immunity.

Lincoln handled some 27 murder cases and tried several of them as well as many civil jury trials. In his most famous criminal case, he impeached the prosecution's witness who testified he saw the incident by light of the moon; Lincoln produced the Almanac showing no moon on the day in question and won an acquittal. With the coming of the railroad, Lincoln represented the Illinois Central and took cases against the company – 71 for, 62 against. Fraker emphasized that Lincoln did not litigate for causes but rather practiced law to make a living, with this exception: His client the Temperance Union whose women damaged a bar; they lost and were fined two dollars by Judge Davis.

While on circuit attorneys stayed in taverns and inns, often sleeping two or three to a bed and on the floor, and where drinking was not unknown. Lincoln did not drink but indulged in storytelling, often bawdy. He also was a voracious reader, but most important were the associations he made while practicing on circuit. These were vital in launching his political career, Fraker relating how Lincoln would try cases during the day

and give political speeches at night. Judge Davis was so impressed with Lincoln that he engineered his nomination at the Wigwam in 1860.

Guy Fraker seemingly can tell stories about Lincoln's cases as well as Abe could have himself. His notable books vividly describe the practice of law on the frontier and provide details on the geography, history, and people of central Illinois during Lincoln's formative years, a treasure trove of information on a critical time in Illinois' and the nation's history. Guy Fraker gives us just about all we need to know about Lincoln's practice, the people he associated with on the circuit and who eventually lifted him up to the presidency. A great contribution to Lincoln scholarship.



## 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

Dinner choices are Chicken kabob or Rigatoni

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

The Kenosha Civil War Museum will feature our own **Dennis Doyle** on February 13<sup>th</sup>, presenting on "Irish Americans in the Civil War." 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/>

**Rob Girardi** will have a busy February:

February 4 Lake Forest Library/Abraham Lincoln's Doctor's Dog

February 7 Seminar at Appomattox C.H., Farmville VA/The Civil War Generals

February 11 Warrenville Public Library/Abraham Lincoln and the Common Soldier

## More Upcoming Local Civil War Events

Feb. 4th, Kankakee Valley CWRT: Dale Hill on "Women of the Civil War"

Feb. 6th, Northern Illinois CWRT: Wayne Rhine on "The Great Escape from Libby Prison"

Feb. 8th, Northwest Indiana CWRT: Tom Rock on "The Army of Northern Virginia at Gettysburg"

Feb. 9th, Gail Borden Library in Elgin: Armchair General Discussion Group

Feb. 10th, Southwest Michigan CWRT: Father Bob Miller on "From Rome to Appomattox--A History of Military Chaplains"

Feb. 10th, McHenry County CWRT: Stuart Sanders on "Aftermath of Battle: Perryville" (zoom only)

Feb. 12th, Milwaukee CWRT: Keith Bohannon on "Wheeler's Cavalry During the Atlanta Campaign"

Feb. 17th, Lincoln-Davis CWRT: Steve Alban on "England and Russia as a Cause of the Civil War"

Feb. 21st, Salt Creek CWRT: Dennis Doyle on "Cold Harbor"

Feb. 26th, South Suburban CWRT: Chuck Rebesco on "The Gibraltar Brigade of the Army of the Potomac"

Mar. 2nd, Rock Valley CWRT: John L. Hopkins on "The Gettysburg Reunion of 1913"

Mar. 4th, Kankakee Valley CWRT: Rob Girardi on "General John A. Logan"

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

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## Future Chicago CWRT Meetings

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

**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

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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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At the Winter Board Meeting of the CWRT, **Dennis Doyle**, our ex-President, was appointed to fill the vacant post of 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President.

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Longtime CWRT member **Ron Carlson** passed away Jan. 28<sup>th</sup>, after a brief illness.

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

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### **February Meetings from the Past:**

2021—Leslie Goddard presented "Clara Barton, Civil War Nurse"

2016—Don Doyle on "The Cause of All Nations"

2011—Dan Sutherland on "Guerilla Warfare in the Civil War"

2006—James McPherson on "Abraham Lincoln as Commander in Chief"

1941—Robert Kinkaid on "The Cumberland Gap in the Civil War"

