THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

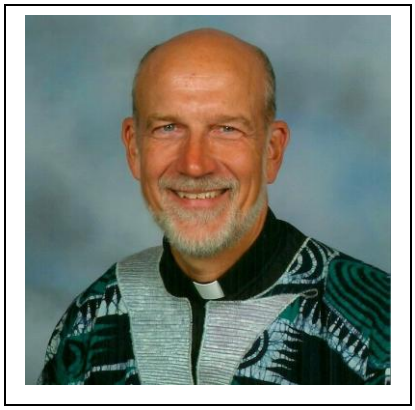
Volume LXXXVI, Number 3 Chicago, Illinois November 2026

852nd REGULAR MEETING, Friday, November 13th, 2026, at the **Blossom Cafe**.

Rev. Bob Miller on

"Angels of the Battlefield: Catholic Nuns in the Civil War"

Live Meeting. Time: November 13th, 2026, 7:30 PM CST.



When the Civil War began, there were virtually no trained nurses in America except Catholic nuns, who already were staffing 28 hospitals. Despite prejudice and resistance from Protestants like Dorothea Dix, nearly 700 nuns became quickly in demand on both sides by doctors and medical officers because of their quiet faithfulness, professional work ethic and nursing skills. They staffed hospital ships on the Mississippi, military hospitals and makeshift field stations across nearly all theaters of the war. These humble spiritual women performed any task asked of them in the horrific wartime medical conditions, all to ease the suffering of the sick and wounded. They labored in dangerous and sometimes hostile territory assisting in surgery, supervising wards, housekeeping, cooking and ministering on the battlefield. Many soldiers experienced a conversion or were baptized because of their quiet but powerful "Faith in action," and countless preconceptions and anti-Catholic prejudices were transformed as well.

From Union hospitals like the massive Satterlee (in Philadelphia), those in Washington DC, Pittsburgh, Louisville and Mound City IL, to Confederate hospitals in places like Richmond, Vicksburg, Atlanta, Jackson … nuns were everywhere, always on the move where needed, quietly giving unmatched service to wounded soldiers desperate for care

and comfort. These Catholic women brought a unique female "active spirituality" (discipline, skill, compassion and quiet Faith) at a horrific deadly time of our history when death, disease and despair ravaged so many unfortunate victims. Their amazing story is rarely spoken of in Civil War talks, workshops or displays--and tonight we will give these forgotten women their due place in history, as we tell the story of the women called "God's geese" and the "flying artillery"--the "nuns of the battlefield"!

Rev. Robert J. Miller is a Catholic priest of 50+ years, formerly a full-time preacher with the Redemptorists, now retired from 35 years of inner-city Chicago ministry in the Archdiocese of Chicago. He has Masters Degrees in Religious Education and Divinity, authored 5 books on spirituality and faith, founded an inner-city Chicago housing corporation, and was an adjunct professor of Church History at the University of St. Mary of the Lake. A former President of the Chicago Civil War Round Table, he frequently speaks on topics of spirituality and history, especially on Civil War religion and chaplains.

His 2007 book, Both Prayed to the Same God: Religion and Faith in the Civil War, was the first book-length overview of the topic. His newest book, Faith of the Fathers: A Comprehensive Study of Catholic Civil War Chaplains, was published by Notre Dame Press in April 2025.

Battlefield Preservation

For nearly 40 years, it's been a long game. One threatened property saved. One development stopped. One more acre protected for future generations.

That persistence helped turn a once-endangered battlefield into Culpeper Battlefields State Park. But the long game isn't over.

Today, 414 more acres at Brandy Station are within reach. Valued at more than $8 million, this historic land can be permanently protected for approximately $150 per acre. Together, we can help secure the next chapter of Brandy Station's preservation story.

Together, we can also save land in Tennessee, Georgia, and Alabama at four Western Theater battlefields: Shiloh, Stones River, Dallas, and Spanish Fort.

Because the greatest victories aren't won in a day. They're built by people like you who never give up.

Thank you for your support,

David Duncan, American Battlefield Trust

October Presentation

By Mark Matranga

Joshua Lindamood gave an introspective view of Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia's last campaign at The Civil War Round Table's 851st Regular Meeting on October 9, 2026. In "Black Friday, The Battle of Sailor's Creek," Lindamood related the fate of part of Lee's army that was still full of fight as it attempted to unite with the Confederate army in North Carolina. This battle has seemingly been ignored, in large part due to the drama at Appomattox Court House three days later, on April 9, 1865. It was General Sheridan, commanding Union forces at Sailor's Creek who commented, "The fight was so overshadowed by the stirring events of the surrender," and who spoke of the intensity of an adversary who did not want to be captured.

After defeat at Five Forks and the final breakthrough at Petersburg, Lee evacuated that city and Richmond on April 2, 1865. All railroads entering the city having been interdicted, the army marched west toward Amelia Court House planning to consolidate after crossing the Appomattox River. However, elements of Ewell's and Gordon's corps were 8-10 miles distant on the April 4 rendezvous date, and Mahone's men were still east of the river. And Union cavalry was in pursuit south of the river.

Eventually, Mackenzie's moved on Amelia Court House and Crook's cavalry blocked the railroad southwest to Danville. Ewell and Mahone still lingered east of the river and did not arrive until April 5. Complicating matters was the lack of rations; Lee had anticipated food and ordinance at Amelia Court House, but these did not materialize. Union cavalry intercepted a large wagon train of provisions near Amelia Springs, creating further difficulties. Lee also took measures to move wagons and artillery out of the line of march, which caused delay.

On April 5, finding his route southwest to Danville via the railroad at Burkeville blocked, with three Federal infantry corps awaiting him there, Lee changed direction, moving west toward Farmville, again with the promise of rations. Confederate troops stretched out on roads from Amelia Court House now backed up at the bridges over Sailor's Creek. With Union cavalry pressing from the south and its infantry following the roads toward Sailor's Creek, the stage was set for the climactic battle.

The engagements on April 6, 1865, took place at along Sailor's Creek near the Hillsman House on the road from Amelia Court House southwest toward Rice's Station, where Wright's Corps met Ewell's force perched on the ridge across the creek; and about a mile south of there at Marshall's Crossroads where Merritt's Cavalry Corps assaulted Anderson's depleted divisions of Pickett, Johnson, and Kershaw. These two engagements make up the battle of Sailor's Creek. Further north at Lockett's Farm, Gordon's corps engaged Humphrey's II Corps; these same units also fought on April 6 and 7 at the High Bridge east of Farmville which carried the South Side Railroad across the river.

Sailor's Creek was a disaster for the Confederate army. Ewell lacked ordinance as this was with Gordon; he thus was unable to respond to Wright's artillery. The eventual infantry assault led to massive hand-to-hand fighting, but the artillery barrages had had their effect and Ewell's men began to surrender in droves. At Marshall's Crossroads, the result was similar after Union cavalry pressed both of Anderson's flanks and broke through Confederate lines: his men began to surrender. Observing this, General Lee cried out, "My God! Has the army dissolved?" In reporting the day's successful result, General Sheridan advised General Grant, "If the thing is pressed I think that Lee will surrender." Hearing this, President Lincoln replied, "Let the thing be pressed."

The Confederate army suffered some 8,800 casualties at Sailor's Creek, out of 11,500 engaged, this was approximately one-fourth of Lee's army; some 7,700 of these were captured. Union losses were 1,150 of 16,000 engaged. Lee's demoralized force limped to Appomattox Court House where the General surrendered it three days later. In retrospect, Sailor's Creek seems an unnecessary battle, considering the Confederates were not only outmatched but also hungry and exhausted after the chaos following Five Forks. Gordon's words are most relevant: "We were fighting all day, marching all night. It was one continuous fight." For many soldiers, the fight at Sailor's Creek was incredibly sanguine. Even hardened veterans such as the 140th Pennsylvania private could utter in despair, "Such destruction I never saw."

Would it have been more prudent to have planned the inevitable retreat from Petersburg earlier, when uniting with Johnston's army in North Carolina might have been possible? This is conjecture: The Army of Northern Virginia persisted, even when the end appeared near. As for the carnage near the Hillsman House, Lindamood offered a sobering thought - "Most peaceful places are where the most terrific fighting took place."



Our in-person meetings are this month held at:
Blossom Cafe, 8349 West Lawrence in Chicago
Dinner and meeting: $50.00 Members and Non-Members
Dinner at 6:30
Menu choices: Beef kabob or rigatoni primavera

BULLETIN BOARD

The **Kenosha Civil War Museum** will feature Beverly Vallancourt on November 13th, presenting on "Courage Defined.**"** The event is part of their Friday lunchbox series and will run from noon to one.

The Museum has a great ongoing exhibit on the "8th Illinois Cavalry," featuring the collections of our CWRT's past president, the late Marshall Krolick.

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

Jon Sebastian is speaking 2p.m. on Tuesday, November 10, on "World War II Heroes in World War I." It will be at the Al Hattendorf Center in Elk Grove Village.

A **Veterans' Day** ceremony honoring our war dead will be held at Rosehill Cemetery, Nov. 7th, at 11 a.m. Period reenactors will be there.

Dennis Doyle will be speaking Nov, 11th at the Plainfield Public Library, at 2 p.m., on "Windy City at War: Chicago and the Suburbs During World War II."

Looking for Mr. Lincoln? Kevin Wood does great portrayals of our 16th President, and he's often in the Chicago area. Visit www.mrlincoln.com for his (busy) schedule.

On November 9, at the Sedgebrook, Lincolnshire, **Rob Girardi** will present "Honoring the Brave: The Origins of Veterans Day." On the same day, he'll present that program to the Lake Villa District Library.

Bruce Allardice's article on the "National Pastime" of the Confederacy, "Ballplaying Rebels: Baseball in the Confederate Army" will appear in the next *Baseball Research Journal* of the Society for American Baseball Research (SABR).

More Upcoming Local Civil War Events

Nov. 2nd, Rock Valley CWRT: Doug Dammann on "Elmer Ellsworth and the U.S. Zouave Cadets"
Nov. 5th, Kankakee Valley CWRT: Art Foley on "Shouting the Battle Cry of Freedom"
Nov. 6th, Northern Illinois CWRT: Andrea Nolen on "Lincoln's Counterfeiters"
Nov. 10th, McHenry County CWRT: John Horn on "The Crater Battle at Vicksburg"
Nov. 12th, Milwaukee CWRT: Bob Miller on "Angels of the Battlefield: Catholic Nuns in the Civil War"
Nov. 17th, Lincoln-Davis CWRT: Andrea Nolen on "Lincoln's Counterfeiters"
Nov. 19th, South Suburban CWRT: Eric Benjaminson on "The 82nd Illinois at Gettysburg"
Nov. 21st, Salt Creek CWRT: Ginny Procuniar on "The Lunatic Asylum Bank Robbery"

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

Future Chicago CWRT Meetings

Dec. 11th: Stuart Dempsey on "'So outrageously and so persistently misrepresented': The 11th Corps at Chancellorsville and Gettysburg"
Jan. 8th, 2027: Dan Masters on "Hell By the Half Acre: The Stones River Campaign"
Feb. 12th: Rob Girardi on "Gouverneur K. Warren in the Gettysburg Campaign"
March 12th: Doug Dammann, Nevins-Freeman Address: "Stories from the Kenosha Civil War Museum"
April 9th: Dave Powell on "Who Won the Battle of Chickamauga?"
May 14th: Lucas Wilder on "Longstreet's East Tennessee Campaign"
June 11th: Kevin Donovan on "The Court Martial of Fitz John Porter: Fair or Fixed?"

The **Abraham Lincoln Book Shop** in its "House Divided" series of author interviews, will feature James Lee McDonough discussing his new book, Grant: The Making of a Legendary Military Leader. The podcast is November 19th at 3:30 CST.

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

November Meetings from the Past:

2021 (5 years ago)— Tom Clemens on "Joseph K. Mansfield"

2016 (10 years ago)— Dave Connon on "Iowa Copperheads"

2011 (15 years ago)— Gail Stephens on "Early's 1864 Invasion of Maryland"

1941 (75 years ago)— Stanley Horn on "The Army of Tennessee"

Chickamauga-Chattanooga 2027 Battlefield Tour

Reserve the dates: April 28-May 1, 2027. Jim Ogden and Dave Powell will be our tour guides. More information to come later.

Craig Symonds

A great friend of the CWRT movement, and a great historian, **Craig Symonds**, died on October 13th. Craig presented three times to our CWRT, and in 2009 received our Nevins-Freeman Award for distinguished scholarship.



Primarily a naval historian, he taught at the US Navy's War College and authored several books, including the prize-winning Lincoln and His Admirals.

Our Civil War community is poorer by his loss.

