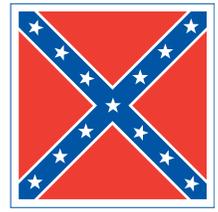


# THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

Founded December 3, 1940



Volume LXXIV, Number 5

Chicago, Illinois

January 2014



## 727th REGULAR MEETING

Robert I. Girardi

on

### “The Murder of General William ‘Bull’ Nelson”

★★★★★

Friday, January 10

★★★★★

HOLIDAY INN MART PLAZA

350 NORTH ORLEANS STREET

*Cocktails at 5:30 p.m.*

*Dinner at 6:30 p.m.*

**\$47 - Members/Non-members**

*Entrée: Chicken Napoleon.*

*Baked Tilapia.*

*Vegetarian Plate or*

*Fruit Plate*

#### Please Note:

Make your reservations by Wednesday, Jan. 8, by emailing [dinnerreservations@chicagocwrt.org](mailto:dinnerreservations@chicagocwrt.org), or calling 630 460-1865 with the names of your party and choice of entrée.

If a cancellation becomes necessary after dinner reservations have been made, please email us at [dinnerreservations@chicagocwrt.org](mailto:dinnerreservations@chicagocwrt.org) and/or call us at 630-460-1865.

We are offering the option of choosing not to have dinner and coming only for the address at 7:15 p.m., for a charge of \$10 per person.

*Parking at the Holiday Inn is \$12 with a validated parking sticker.*

Robert I. Girardi

on

### “The Murder of General William ‘Bull’ Nelson”

BY BRUCE ALLARDICE

On September 29th, 1862, a Union army general literally got away with murder.

At 6-4 and 300 pounds, General William “Bull” Nelson may have been the biggest general in the war. And by all accounts, his foul temper matched his size. The native Kentuckian and prewar naval officer had been promoted to general by President Lincoln, and at this time in 1862 was trying to organize the defenses of Louisville, Kentucky, against a threatened attack by General Braxton Bragg’s Confederate army.

Subordinated to Nelson was an equally feisty general, the oddly-named (for a Union general, at least) Jefferson Davis. The two clashed. Nelson criticized Davis for not knowing how many troops he (Davis) commanded -- and on September 22nd, Nelson relieved Davis of his command. Davis seethed over the rebuke, which led to a fatal encounter at the Galt Hotel in Louisville a week later. In front of witnesses, including prominent army officers and politicians, Davis shot and killed Nelson. The motives behind the shooting, and how Davis was never punished for his murder, make for a fascinating look at the interplay of personalities and politics. Among other results, the murder probably kept the Union army from decisively winning the Battle of Perryville a short time later.



Robert I. Girardi

On January 10th, Robert I. Girardi will examine the murder through the lens of 22 years of experience as a homicide detective. Robert Girardi is an author and historian and is a popular speaker and consultant on the American Civil War to audiences of all ages. Robert is on the Board of the ISHS and the Camp Douglas Restoration Foundation, has consulted for the Chicago History Museum (Chicago Historical Society), and has collaborated with historical artist Keith Rocco, historian/authors Peter Cozzens, Nathaniel Cheairs Hughes Jr., Theodore J. Karamanski, Noah A. Trudeau and others. He has spoken to historical societies, libraries, schools at all levels, and Civil War groups all over the United States.

Robert earned his M.A. in Public History at Loyola University of Chicago in 1991. He is a past president of the Civil War Round Table of Chicago and newsletter editor of the Salt Creek Civil War Round Table. He has authored or coauthored numerous books, including his latest, The Civil War Generals. Comrades, Peers, Rivals (Zenith Press, 2013).



## Trail of Tears/Cracker Line Road is Dedicated in Chattanooga, Tenn.

BY GREGORY L. WADE

**Chattanooga, Tenn.** – A .6-mile segment of road used during the Cherokee Indian removal 175 years ago, and 25 years later as part of a critical Union supply line, has opened.

Chattanooga and Chickamauga National Military Park (CCNMP) dedicated Brown's Ferry Federal Road on October 26. The reclaimed road was discovered by researchers at the park's Moccasin Bend Archeological District, the land that forms a part of the critical geography around Chattanooga bordered by the Tennessee River.

The road was part of the Trail of Tears, a system of trails used to remove the Cherokee during President Andrew Jackson's infamous relocation of the tribe to Indian Territory, now Oklahoma, in 1838.

In 1863, nearly starving Federal troops broke the Confederate siege at Brown's Ferry allowing supplies to flow on the same trail into Chattanooga on what became known as the "Cracker Line."

Moccasin Bend was also an important site for artillery placement and troop movements during the 1863 Battles for Chattanooga as it is directly across the Tennessee River from then Confederate-held Lookout Mountain.

Representatives of the Cherokee Nation from Tahlequah, Okla., and historians studying the impact of the Cracker Line on the Civil War in the West attended the dedication.

Christopher Young, Park Ranger-Interpretation and Resource Education, said the Federal Road is more a "trace" than a "trail" in the original sense. What park visitors will find is a cleared path through the woods.

Sections of it follow the original road, which may date to circa 1805, and is several feet below where visitors walk.

Some 780 acres of Moccasin Bend land became a National Park Service (NPS) unit in 2003. Young said the project to locate the road bed, hidden by forest and swampy areas adjacent to the river, has made great progress since 2010.

"We used an 1863 U.S. Coast Survey map and an 1820 survey found in Robert Armstrong's Survey Book of Cherokee Lands," he said. Those lands were granted from the treaty of Feb. 27, 1819.

The survey was used to create a view of the modern-day boundary of John Brown's Reservation. Brown was Cherokee who received a 640-acre reservation that included about 100 acres at the northern end of archeological district that comprise the current Brown's Ferry Federal Road property.

Young said this tract was received as a donation after the Friends of Moccasin Bend initially purchased and preserved the majority of the acreage.

Young described a process of overlaying old maps along with modern technology to identify the road. The use of light detection and ranging (LDAR) technology pretty much narrowed it down.

Then archeological studies confirmed the .6 of a mile road bed with remnants of a possible corduroy road as well as packed soil. The road was no longer used by the end of the 19th century and was lost to plowing and overgrowth.

Young noted more work is needed on the road, including the removal of stumps and old trash sites.

Standing on the east bank of the Tennessee River, an interpretative sign points out the "notch" in the far bank where Brown's Ferry was in the 1800s. Young said the ferry site across the riv-

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www.chicagocwrt.org

The only requirement for membership in The Civil War Round Table is a genuine interest in the Civil War and its era. For information, address Membership Committee, 1039 Hinswood, Darien, Illinois 60561, or editor@chicagocwrt.org.

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er is on private property. The road is easy to access and has limited parking. It is marked by an NPS sign.

Historically critical land on Moccasin Bend, much of it still "sensitive," has Indian burial grounds as well as militarily significant sites, according to Young.

In 1996 the NPS described Moccasin Bend as the "best preserved and most important compact, yet diverse, sample of archeological remains known in the Tennessee Valley."

Young said NPS tours from time to time are the only way for private parties to see the property. The new road represents the park service "putting a foot into the water" in terms of public access on Moccasin Bend.

The success of the Brown's Ferry Federal Road, as well as how the site is treated, will go a long way toward determining future park interpretation for the public, according to Young.

On the first weekend of ranger tours, almost 200 people walked the historic road to the banks of the Tennessee River, wondering how it must have been 175 and 150 years ago.

From December *Civil War News*

## December Meeting

BY MARK MATRANGA

**Kevin Weddle** addressed The Civil War Round Table at its 726th meeting on December 13, 2013 on "Lincoln's Tragic Admiral." Rear Admiral Samuel Francis Du Pont is an obscure figure today, but was an experienced sailor who served actively for 50 years, half that time at sea, and made significant contributions to the navy. Appointed to both West Point and the navy, he chose the latter and entered the navy in 1815 as a midshipman at age twelve. In his first decades, Du Pont 'learned the ropes,' becoming a very good seaman and developing an outstanding reputation in what was a small navy. There were only seven hundred officers by the 1830's; promotion was by seniority only. This frustrated Du Pont and other young, aggressive, and capable officers.

In 1845 Du Pont served on the board which established the Naval Academy. He influenced academy traditions, promoted professionalism, and also served as a mentor for many junior officers. He was appointed to his first command in 1845, and then commanded the U.S.S. Congress in October 1845 with orders to transport Commodore Stockton to his command of the Pacific Squadron. This cruise lasted three years due to the outbreak of the Mexican War, during which he conducted a blockade of the west coast of Mexico with the U.S.S. Cyan and participated in combined operations with the army. Returning in October 1848, Du

Pont was the toast of the navy, but he remained a commander.

Du Pont spent the next nine years on shore duty, writing a memorandum on naval strategy in 1850 which became the blueprint for the naval building program in the mid-1850's, and drafting legislation in 1855 establishing a board of examiners. This board separated one-third of all naval officers, permitting promotion of many who played key roles in both union and confederate navies. Du Pont then commanded the U.S.S. Minnesota, a new steam warship on her maiden voyage, a diplomatic mission to China. This experience taught him the intricacies of fueling, supplying and maintaining steamships, which proved invaluable in conducting civil war operations. Following this cruise and 45 years of service, he was appointed commander of the Philadelphia Navy Yard in December 1860.

After Fort Sumter, Lincoln issued a Proclamation of Blockade. Secretary of Navy Gideon Welles, facing a dilemma of how to blockade 3,000 miles of coast line and 180 ports with 40 ships, called for Du Pont's help. Du Pont's plan, eventually executed, called for four squadrons, the number of ships needed, and bases within the Confederacy. Du Pont was appointed to command the South Atlantic Squadron which covered Charleston and Savannah. He planned and commanded the December 1861 amphibious operation which captured Port Royal

Sound for his squadron's base of operations, and other joint operations as well.

With the clash of the ironclads in Hampton Roads in March 1862, Welles and Assistant Secretary Fox ordered an all navy operation to take Charleston using monitor-type ironclads. Du Pont resisted this idea, arguing for a joint operation, but did not raise his concerns when he met with Lincoln. Eventually, the Charleston operation was undertaken with a fleet of untrained crews and inadequate guns. On April 7, 1863, Du Pont took his 26 guns into the 'most heavily fortified port in the world' against 150 guns registered on all points of the channel. After two hours of pounding by 2,200 rounds with only 154 fired in response, Du Pont retired. Du Pont fell out with his superiors after the battle. When ordered to attempt the operation again he refused. Eventually, he asked to be relieved, and was. His successor, Dahlgren, made another futile attempt and concluded Du Pont was right.

Du Pont sought to clear his name but was unsuccessful. He died of an acute asthma attack on June 23, 1865. Weddle argued persuasively that Du Pont does not enjoy the reputation he should for his role in planning and executing the blockade, and for what he left the navy: a legacy of professionalism, promotion by merit, and a navy qualitatively and quantitatively better fit to fight the war.

## GRAPESHOT



Robert Girardi's new book, The Civil War Generals, is now "out" and available for purchase via Amazon and local bookstores. In the words of the publishers, the book "offers an unvarnished and largely unknown window into what military generals wrote and said about each other..."

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On Jan. 18th, Bruce Allardice will speak on "Civil War Movies" to the Daughters of the Union in Naperville.

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On January 10, at the **Civil War Museum, Kenosha**, Dan Nettesheim will discuss "the Chattanooga Campaign: Critical Contrasts and Paradoxes," 12 noon. On January 11, *Seeing the Elephant*, a new movie focused on personal experiences and accounts of citizen soldiers, opens in the Fiery Trial exhibit. Information on all museum programs is available at [www.thecivilwarmuseum.org](http://www.thecivilwarmuseum.org) or (262) 653-4140.

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The CWRT's winter **Executive Committee** Meeting is scheduled for Saturday, Jan. 25th at the Chicago History Museum, starting at 9 a.m. Any member is welcome to attend.

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

Know of any upcoming talks, events, or publications? All members are welcome to contribute items to the newsletter. Contact the editor at [editor@chicagocwrt.org](mailto:editor@chicagocwrt.org) or (630) 297-8046.

### SCHIMMELFENNIG BOUTIQUE

Sixty plus years of audio recordings of CWRT lectures by distinguished historians are available and can be purchased in CD format. For pricing and a lecture list, please contact Hal Ardell at [hal229@ameritech.net](mailto:hal229@ameritech.net) or phone him at (773) 774-6781.

Each meeting features a book raffle, with proceeds going to battlefield preservation. There is also a silent auction for books donated by Ralph Newman and others, again with proceeds benefiting battlefield preservation.

### More Upcoming Civil War Events

- Jan. 3rd, Northern Illinois CWRT: Wayne Rhine on "Lincoln: The Lawyer"
- Jan. 9th, Lake County CWRT: Open Discussion on Vicksburg
- Jan. 9th, Milwaukee CWRT: Robert Girardi on "The Murder of General William 'Bull' Nelson"
- Jan. 15th, Starved Rock CWRT of Ottawa: Dan Schott on "Six Civil War Presidents"
- Jan. 17th, Salt Creek CWRT: Wayne Wolf and Bruce Allardice on "Charles F. Gunther, Mississippi River Confederate"
- Jan. 21st, Lincoln-Davis CWRT: Margaret Storey on "Tried Men and True"
- Jan. 23rd, South Suburban CWRT: Donna Work on "The GAR's 1900 Chicago Encampment"
- Jan. 25th, Chicago Public Library, Austin-Irving Branch: David Keller on "Camp Douglas"

## Bulletin Board



### FUTURE MEETINGS

Regular meetings are held at the Holiday Inn Mart Plaza, 350 North Orleans Street, the second Friday of each month, *unless otherwise indicated*.

Feb. 14: Harold Knudsen, "General Longstreet"

March 14: Aaron Barnhart, "Price's 1864 Missouri Raid"

April 11: Scott Bowden, "Last Chance for Victory"

May 9: Dan Bastian, "Grant's Canal"

June 13: Kenneth Noe, "The War in Appalachia"

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The next **Virtual Book Signing** will take place in Saturday, January 11th at noon. Join the Abraham Lincoln Bookshop for a book discussion with Rachel Sheldon. Rachel's new book, *Washington Brotherhood*, examines the politics and social life within the antebellum Washington community.

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**Happy New Year!**



## 150 YEARS AGO – JANUARY 1864



- 2nd:** The Confederate Congress confirms George Davis's (no relation to President Davis) appointment to Attorney-General
- 11th:** The 13th Amendment (ending slavery) to the Constitution is proposed by Senator John B. Henderson of Missouri
- 20th:** President Abraham Lincoln instructs Arkansas commander General Frederick Steele to permit elections following the proposed anti-slavery constitution of the state
- 22nd:** Union General William S. Rosecrans is ordered to take command of the Department of Missouri
- 22nd:** Arkansas Unionists select pro-Unionist Isaac Murphy as provisional governor, pending elections to be held that spring
- 23rd:** Trade restrictions for Missouri and Kentucky are lifted
- 25th:** Confederates organize a government of Louisiana around their new governor, General Henry W. Allen. Its capital is Shreveport.
- 25th:** Nathan Bedford Forrest [CS] attacks and defeats William Sooy Smith [US] near Meridian, MS
- 26th:** Battle of Athens, AL. On the morning of January 26, 1864, at around 4:00 a.m., 600 Confederate cavalymen of attacked Athens, which was being held by a Union force of only 100. Even though the Union defenders had no fortifications and were outnumbered six to one, they were able to repulse the Confederate attack and force them into a retreat after a two-hour battle.
- 26th:** Local elections are permitted in Tennessee where the federal government feels it is in control of the state
- 29th:** Confederate attack on the Sir William Wallace, a steamer filled with northern goods, as it moved down the Mississippi River towards New Orleans

### This month in the history of the Chiago CWRT

- Jan., 1941 (73 years ago):** Elmer Gertz spoke on "Wilbur F. Storey and the *Chicago Times* in the Civil War" (note: this was the 2nd meeting of the CWRT)
- Jan., 1964 (50 years ago):** Edward F. Coffman spoke on "The Civil War Career of Captain Thomas H. Hines"
- Jan., 1989 (25 years ago):** Bruce Bazelon spoke on "Gettysburg: After the Fight"
- Jan., 2004 (10 years ago):** Arnold Schofield spoke on "Forgotten Warriors: American Indians in the Civil War"
- Jan., 2009 (5 years ago):** Frank O'Reilly spoke on "Hidden Fredericksburg—the Battle We Thought We Knew"

## Johnson's Island Civil War Baseball Game to be Re-Created August 24th

On August 27, 1864 Confederate Officer prisoners of war played what may be the first inter-team baseball game in northwestern Ohio. The site for the well-attended and well-documented match was the Johnson's Island POW Depot located on Johnsons Island in Lake Erie, offshore of Sandusky, Ohio. Many of the participants were members of established antebellum baseball clubs that played in New Orleans prior to the war. The "southern gentlemen" taught a thing or two about the national pastime to their Northern captors that day.

This match will be recreated 150 years later, Sunday, August 24, 2014 on the site of the original match, now a National Historic

Landmark. The re-enactors will be members of two veteran vintage baseball clubs, The Great Black Swamp Frogs Base Ball Club of Sylvania, Ohio and The Ohio Village Muffins representing the Ohio Historical Society. Every effort will be made to present a game as historically accurate as possible.

The event is sponsored by the Friends and Descendants of Johnson's Island Civil War Prison, David R. Bush, Ph.D., Chair. Other events to be held in conjunction with the 150th anniversary celebration game are being planned.

