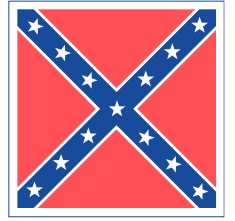


# THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

Founded December 3, 1940

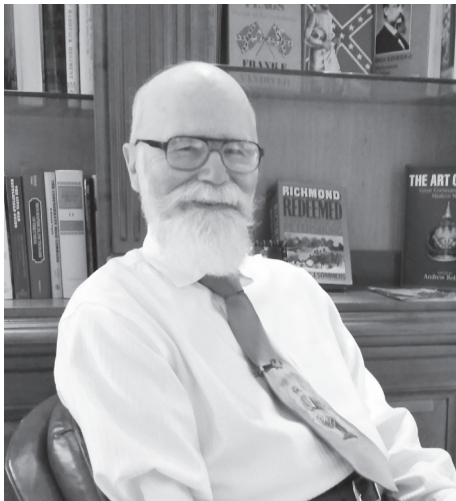


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## *Richard Summers Richmond Redeemed: Enduring Lessons in Leadership from the Siege of Petersburg*



The Siege of Petersburg was the longest campaign of the Civil War, nine-and-a-half months. It centered on the Northern attack and Southern defense of the Confederate capital, Richmond, and its crucial line-of-communications center, Petersburg. The campaign pitted the foremost general of each nation - Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant for the United States and General Robert E. Lee for the Confederate States - directly against each other. It demonstrated how, despite overwhelming odds, the great Virginian prolonged the life of his army, his capital, and his country by almost a year. And it also disclosed how the great Federal commander converted advantages into achievements and eventually destroyed the once mighty Army of Northern Virginia and, with it, the Confederacy itself.

43+ years at the U.S. Army Military History Institute/U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center. Even after nominally "retiring" as the Senior Historian of the Center in January of 2014, he continues teaching in the U.S. Army War College, writing about the Civil War, and speaking to Civil War groups across the nation. He has published over 100 books, articles, chapters, entries, and reviews on the Civil War. His most recent book - the expanded, revised, 150th Anniversary edition of Richmond Redeemed: The Siege at Petersburg - was published by Savas-Beatie in September, 2014. It was honored by the Army Historical

Foundation with a Distinguished Writing Award as the best expanded reprint book of 2014 on Army history. In May, 2015, he was designated a Distinguished Fellow of the U.S. Army War College, an honor accorded to only one per cent of the approximately 3400 faculty who have taught at that institution since 1950. A graduate of Carleton College with a doctorate from Rice University, he was born and raised in suburban Chicagoland. He and his wife, Tracy, reside in Carlisle, Pennsylvania.



### **758th REGULAR MEETING**

★★★★★

Friday, January 13th

★★★★★

HOLIDAY INN O'HARE

5615 N. CUMBERLAND, CHICAGO

*Cocktails at 5:30 p.m.*

*Dinner at 6:30 p.m.*

**\$50 - Members/Non-members**

**ENTRÉE**

**PORK LOIN OR HALIBUT**

On January 13th, Dr. Richard Summers will speak on the siege, highlighting enduring lessons in leadership at corps, army, army group, theater, and national levels of command which General Grant, General Lee, and their senior subordinates demonstrated in the Siege of Petersburg.

Dr. Richard J. Sommers served for

## FREDERICKSBURG--KEY PROPERTY PROTECTED

With its recent purchase of a once-threatened 25-acre property on the southern end of the

Fredericksburg Battlefield, the Civil War Trust has forever protected in excess of 22,000 acres of hallowed ground in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Prior to the Trust's purchase of the 25-acre parcel, Spotsylvania County had approved the construction of 98 townhouses on the property. However, after negotiations with the Trust, local real estate developer Lee Garrison agreed to sell at a price discounted some \$ 1.14 million from the property's appraised value. The remainder of the \$ 2.59 million transaction price came from a \$ 100,000 grant from the Virginia Battlefield Preservation Fund and \$ 1.2 million from the National Park Service's American Battlefield Protection Program--both matching grants having been secured by the Trust's valued partner, the Central Virginia Battlefields Trust--plus a major gift from a husband-wife pair of longtime Trust supporters who wish to remain anonymous and \$ 100,000 in gifts from members.

The Trust hopes to someday transfer this important property--along with nearby Slaughter Pen Farm, the most expensive project in the Trust's history--to Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park, following an appropriate boundary expansion. Such an expansion would create the opportunity for a unified walking trail stretching from Pelham's Corner at State Route 2, where the two Confederate cannons deployed beyond the Southern line delayed the Union advance, to the General Meade Pyramid, marking the farthest advance of Federal troops at the battle, where they temporarily penetrated General Stonewall Jackson's lines.

With this latest victory, the Trust

has saved a total of 247 acres at Fredericksburg, including the Slaughter Pen Farm, a 208-acre property that witnessed brutal fighting and saw five Union soldiers display such conspicuous gallantry that they earned the Medal of Honor.

### Trust Monitors Host Of Battlefield Threats

In August, a developer submitted plans to the City of Fredericksburg asking for an amendment that would allow the building of 110 townhomes on a 12.2-acre property across the street from Fredericksburg National Cemetery and opposite the Sunken Road. The request would have over-ridden existing documentation from 2003 that would have allowed a 78,000-square-foot fitness center and 24,000-square-foot office complex to be built.

The plan quickly drew opposition from numerous quarters--Friends of the Rappahannock, the National Park Service, neighboring businesses and schools and the editorial board of the Fredericksburg Free Lance-Star. City zoning staff recommended denial of the application based on historical and environmental impact, and the developer withdrew it from consideration by the planning commission prior to its hearing. The Trust continues to actively monitor the situation in case the plan is retooled and resubmitted.

### Virginia Piedmont Battlefields

Dominion Virginia Power is currently pursuing a proposal to remove, then rebuild and enlarge its existing transmission line between substations in Fauquier and Albemarle Counties, Va. This major upgrade is legally required--and supported by Virginia's State Corporation Commission (SCC), which also must approve the plans--to resolve electricity reliability issues in the region. An initial, alternative route

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1039 Hinswood  
Darien, Illinois 60561  
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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.

proposal would have adversely affected the Cedar Mountain Battlefield. But due to an April SCC ruling, the project will adhere to the current route--which traverse five major Civil War battlefields--Brandy Station, Kelly's Ford, Morton's Ford and First and Second Rappahannock Station.

The Trust has been joined in its concerns for the project's potential damage to the region's scenic and cultural resources by the Piedmont Environmental Council (PEC), which has the legal representation and standing to file as a formal respondent to the SCC case. After receiving input from the conservation groups, Dominion proactively agreed to petition the SCC for permission to pursue alternative approaches--such as shorter structures and nonreflecting or deglared conductors--to decrease visual impact of the transmission line in pre-identified, sensitive sections of the corridor. The consensus request was supported by SCC staff, and we anticipate it will be approved in the final ruling shortly.

From the Civil War Trust--Winter 2016

## DECEMBER MEETING

By Mark Matranga

Bjorn Skaptason spoke to The Civil War Round Table at its 757th Regular Meeting on December 9, 2016, on "What I Saw of Shiloh, Ambrose Bierce Goes to War." Known for the biting satire of his fiction, Bierce produced the best non-fiction accounts of the Civil War. Born in 1842 in Meigs County, Ohio, the 19-year old Bierce volunteered early and experienced battle in western Virginia. Mustered out, he re-enlisted in the Ninth Indiana Volunteer Infantry and was promoted to Sergeant. In early 1862, the regiment was assigned to Buell's Army of the Ohio and moved to Nashville where it was placed with Hazen's brigade in Nelson's Division. It was with this unit that Bierce 'saw' Shiloh on April 7, 1862.

Bierce describes events without much compassion and keeps his account to what a fighting soldier usually sees - what is in front of him. The regiment learns of a battle on the April 6th morning wind, "a messenger that does not bear copious details." The headquarters flag "hanging limp and lifeless.... lifted its head to listen" to "a dull, distant sound," and again when "the breeze bore to our ears the long, deep sighing of iron lungs." After the division's night crossing of the Tennessee River and arrival on the battlefield, Bierce recounts his confusion: "What protected our right? Who lay upon our left? Was there really anything in our front?"

Observing from opposite Pittsburg Landing, Bierce sees "a battle burning brightly....broad flushings in the sky....sudden flames.... Fleeting streaks of fire," and describes its sounds: "...the peculiar metallic ring of bursting shells...the magical humming of the fragments as they struck into the ground....The air was full of noises." Listening to musketry rattle on the flanks and growl in front, his experienced ear knew "the death-line was an arc of which the river was the chord." In the distance were outlines that "seemed to me ludicrously like the figures of demons in old allegorical prints of hell."

Passing to the other side, Bierce found chaos in the union rear - "a confused mass of humanity....an abominable mob" was kept off the steamboats with bayonets. Arriving troops from Buell's army derided the defeated with insults. Moving up to the plateau above the landing, Bierce encountered candle-lit tents which constantly received wounded, "yet were never filled; they were continually ejecting the dead, yet were never empty." Bierce and his companions. "a black, sinuous line creeping like a giant serpent" stepped over the dead and wounded as a violent thunderstorm struck in the dark of the night.

The day of battle came "borne to us on the raw morning air, the long weird note of a bugle." Bierce felt

a change in the atmosphere; the men were charged, their beards and hair, if touched, "would have crackled and shot sparks." Being on the left, his unit moved into Cloud Field, where "evidence of the previous day's struggle was present in profusion." Trees were shorn, dead horses and abandoned limbers littered the field. The confederates had reportedly retreated, but upon moving into the Wicker Field the regiment found the enemy in force. The forest seemed to "flame up;" he heard the "sickening 'spat' of lead against flesh." His own artillery, "those cursed guns," was deafening, and seemed only to provide targets for the enemy's guns and produce "mischief" for Bierce and company.

The climax of Bierce's battle came at the Davis Wheatfield, where "lead scored its old-time victory over steel" during a confederate bayonet charge. After multiple volleys and charges came silence; the regiment "sank from sheer fatigue."

When asked some thirty years after the war ended if he ever went back to those days, Whitman answered, "I do not need to, I have never left them." One suspects Skaptason agrees that the same held for Bierce, who put the 'real war' in the books.

## GRAPESHOT



On January 9, at the Manitowoc CWRT, **Rob Girardi** will speak on "The Civil War Generals."

On January 13, noon, at the **Civil War Museum**, Kenosha, **Rob Girardi** will discuss the nature of corps command and rate some of the more prominent generals in that capacity. The free program is sponsored by the Milwaukee Civil War Roundtable and the Iron Brigade Association.

Also at the Museum: January 14, James M. Cornelius, Ph.D., Curator, Lincoln Presidential Library & Museum, Springfield, will discuss "Emancipation: Conspiracy, Politics, or Providence?" 2 p.m.

January 18, 7 p.m., **Dr. Gordon Dammann**, founder of the National Museum of Civil War Medicine and historical consultant for the Public Television series *Mercy Street*, will provide historical context for a sneak preview of season 2. Also re-enactors from the 17th Medical Corps, who will demonstrate Civil War medical care and techniques.

Information on all Civil War Museum programs is available at [www.thecivilwarmuseum.org](http://www.thecivilwarmuseum.org).

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.

### PLEASE NOTE

Make your reservations by Sunday, January 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 FREE.

### More Upcoming Civil War Events

- Jan. 4th, 2017, Kankakee Valley CWRT: Steve DePasquale on "Lincoln's Consideration of Colonization for Fred Slaves"
- Jan. 6th, Northern Illinois CWRT: Bruce Allardice on "The Battle of Ezra Church"
- Jan. 12th, Lake County Civil War Round Table. The group will watch and discuss the movie "Free State of Jones." Popcorn and soda will be provided.
- Jan. 12th, Milwaukee CWRT: Richard Sommers on "Lessons on Leadership in the Petersburg Campaign"
- Jan. 17th, Lincoln-Davis CWRT: Steve Davis on "The Atlanta Campaign"
- Jan. 20th, Salt Creek CWRT: Rob Girardi on "The Rise and Fall of the GAR in Chicago"
- Jan. 26th, South Suburban CWRT: Phil Angelo on "News Reporters During the Civil War"

**Reminder:** The CWRT of Chicago's **Winter Executive Committee Meeting** will be held at the Chicago History Museum, January 14th at 9:00 am. All members are welcome to attend.

## Bulletin Board



### FUTURE MEETINGS

Regular meetings are held at the Holiday Inn O'Hare, the second Friday of each month, *unless otherwise indicated*.

Feb. 10th: Bob O'Neil on "Cavalry During the Peninsula Campaign"

Mar. 10th: Paul Kahan on "Simon Cameron, Lincoln's First Secretary of War"

Apr. 14th: Diane Smith on "Command Conflict in the Overland Campaign"

May 12th: Connie Hansen presents a "First Person Portrayal of Jennie Wade's mother"

June 9th: Don Sender on "Custer and the Little Big Horn Campaign"

## Abraham Lincoln Bookshop

They're open for business at their new address, 824 W. Superior St. (Superior and Green), Suite 100, Chicago.

The Dec. 15th *Chicago Tribune* had a great story about our friends at the book shop. See <http://www.chicagotribune.com/business/ct-lincoln-book-shop-daniel-weinberg-exec-qa-1218-biz-20161213-story.html> for more.

Their next "Author's Voice" is 6-7 p.m. Feb. 9th, discussing The Ultimate Guide to the Gettysburg Address with authors David Hirsch and Dan Van Haften.