



THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



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806th REGULAR MEETING, Friday, November 12th, 2021

The Nevins-Freeman Address

Tom Clemens on "General Joseph K. F. Mansfield"

Live/Zoom Meeting. Time: Nov. 12, 2021, 07:30 PM CST

Zoom Option ID 842 6020 7102; Passcode: 297285



The Chicago Civil War Round Table's **Nevins-Freeman Award** is intended to honor those who advance Civil War scholarship and the Round Table movement. Past winners have included Bruce Catton, Gary Gallagher, Bud Robertson and James McPherson. This year we honor **Tom Clemens**, a man who through his writings and battlefield tours has done so much to illuminate the Antietam Campaign,

On October 12th Tom Clemens' Nevins-Freeman address will explore General Joseph K. F. Mansfield's life, including his all-too-brief (2 days) tenure as commander of the XII Corps. What most Civil War enthusiasts know about Joseph K. F. Mansfield, if they know anything at all, is that he was a Union corps commander who was killed at Antietam. While that is true, it was only the end of his 40 plus years of service in the U.S. Army. Often dismissed as a non-combatant through most of his career, he actually was involved in several vital aspects in the early part of the Civil War. The facts are that he was he was anything but a "staff puke," as Ed Bearss once dismissed him on a tour not many years ago.

Dr. Thomas G. Clemens received his Doctorate in History Education from George Mason University, where he studied under noted Civil War historian Dr. Joseph L. Harsh. After a 34 year career at Hagerstown Community College, he retired as Professor Emeritus in 2012. He edited and annotated General Ezra A. Carman's

manuscript, the Maryland Campaign of September 1862, in addition to numerous articles and several monographs, including one on Gen. Joseph K. F. Mansfield. Tom is a founding member and current president of Save Historic Antietam Foundation Inc., a non-profit historic preservation organization and an NPS-certified Antietam Battlefield Guide.

Battlefield Preservation

There are few opportunities to save the hallowed ground where two battles occurred. But given the support and generosity of fellow Trust members, we were able to raise sufficient funds for the one-acre tract at Gaines' Mill and Cold Harbor, where fighting occurred two years apart.

Now, we have the opportunity to secure **99 additional endangered acres at Gaines' Mill and Cold Harbor** at what we call "The Intersection," around the site of the original McGhee farmhouse. ...

This is an unprecedented opportunity to preserve contiguous battlefield property for prosperity! These irreplaceable battlefields face the imminent threat of residential and commercial development. We all know this land needs to be protected, and we can only do it with your support!

Will you join us in this urgent opportunity to preserve 99 acres at Gaines' Mill and Cold Harbor by making a gift today?

Thank you for supporting battlefield preservation.

Sincerely,

Garry Adelman
Chief Historian
American Battlefield Trust

P.S. We now need to raise \$529,429 to match the \$1,192,430 that has already been committed by generous benefactors in order to see this land preserved forever. **Any gift that you give today will be multiplied with an \$3.25-to-\$1 match!**

October Meeting By Mark Matranga

David Dixon spoke to The Civil War Round Table at its 805th Regular Meeting on October 8, 2021, on “The American Civil War: A Radical, International Revolution,” a focus on German émigrés from the failed 1848 revolutions who supported the union cause in the Civil War. As related in his book “Radical Warrior, August Willich’s Journey from German Revolutionary to Union General,” Dixon discussed how one of their significant leaders evolved from Prussian officer to liberal revolutionary in his home country to dedicated social and economic reformer in his adopted country.

Born Johann August Ernst von Willich on November 19, 1810, into a noble military family in East Prussia, Willich completed studies at the German Military Academy in 1828. Notwithstanding his position, Willich was attracted to the social and political movements of the 1840s. His older brother, also a soldier, remained loyal to the state but August forsook his noble name, resigned his commission, and led democratic forces when revolutions erupted across Europe in 1848. But having embraced a lost cause and associated with radical intellectuals (Engels, Herzen; Marx was more an adversary than a friend) as well as fellow revolutionaries and countrymen Franz Sigel and Carl Schurz, Willich’s time on the continent was soon to end. February 1853 found him in New York; he eventually made his way to Cincinnati in 1858 when he became editor of the *German Republican*, a German language free labor newspaper.

When war broke out in 1861 Willich began to recruit in southwest Ohio, home to large numbers of German immigrants. He served first as adjutant with the 9th Ohio at Rich Mountain. In the winter of 1861-62 Indiana Governor Oliver Morton commissioned him colonel of the 32nd Indiana Regiment, an all-German unit. During the second day’s battle at Shiloh when discipline began to dissolve, Willich ordered the regimental band to play “*La Marseillaise*” and led the men through the manual of arms. Probably unprecedented and certainly eccentric, but the command responded brilliantly.

Promoted to brigadier, Willich led brigades during the 1862 Kentucky campaign and at Stones River where he was captured. After being exchanged, he performed with distinction during the Tullahoma (Liberty Gap) and Chattanooga campaigns. His brigade with others held the Union left along the Lafayette Road, helping to avoid a complete rout at Chickamauga. The brigade secured Orchard Knob and famously stormed up Missionary Ridge in late November 1863.

Willich’s active service ended during the Atlanta campaign in mid-May 1864 when he suffered a severe wound at Resaca which caused the loss of use of his right arm. He was posted to Cincinnati where he finished out the war in administrative positions and was later breveted major general. He served as auditor of Hamilton County (Cincinnati) after the war and returned to Germany hoping to renew ties with his family. Due to his

radical views and past actions, his brother refused to reconcile. He settled back in St. Mary's, Ohio, where he died in 1878.

Dixon posits that Willich and his fellow radical emigres saw the war as an extension of the American Revolution and an opportunity to enact radical reform. This seems somewhat far-reaching as Lincoln's primary goal was restoring the union. As late as the summer of 1862, in his famous response to Horace Greeley, Lincoln made clear he would end slavery in whole or in part, but only to save the union. Granted that war aims changed, achieving the ideals of the Declaration was an idea that would have to await the "few remarks" of November 19, 1863. Unfortunately, the hopes raised at war's end were dashed once former secessionists regained power and armed forces left the south. This was very frustrating to Willich who had advocated for greater equality and labor reform.

However, as Dixon argues convincingly, Willich's larger goals were attained - validation of popular government, destruction of slavery, progress toward racial justice - and Willich deservedly should be placed among those who sought social justice in his time. Dixon further points out the vital role immigrants played in the war. Only 48% of Federal troops were native whites; the majority were immigrants (25%), sons of immigrants (18%), and African-American (9%). And as Dixon shows, German troops fought very well, especially those Willich led.



BULLETIN BOARD

The **Kenosha Civil War Museum** is putting on the following in-person programs:

"Essays! The 1st Michigan Engineers"

Friday, November 12 | Noon | Presenter: Brian Conroy

As the Civil War began, the need for trained engineers to guide and build was extremely necessary throughout the military. The U.S. Corps of Engineers was too small to fulfill this role, and so volunteer engineering regiments began emerging, with the Wolverine state bringing forth three of these regiments. The 1st Michigan Engineers and

Mechanics lasted throughout the war, building railroads, bridges, and other fortifications while serving throughout Tennessee and Kentucky, and traveling with General Sherman to Atlanta, Savannah, up through the Carolinas, and finishing their service in the Grand March in Washington, D.C.

For more on programs at the museum, visit

<https://museums.kenosha.org/civilwar/events/>

The **Congress of Civil War Round Tables** is sponsoring a series of virtual Civil War Lectures by some of the nation's leading historians. Visit

<http://www.cwrtcongress.org/lectures.html> to view the complete schedule and register

On December 9th, starting at 3:30 CST, the **Abraham Lincoln Bookshop's** "House Divided" series will feature an interview with author Meg Groeling, who will discuss her latest book, *First Fallen: The Life of Colonel Elmer Ellsworth*. Visit

<https://alincolinbookshop.com/> for more.

More Upcoming Local Civil War Events

Due to government-ordered shutdowns, CWRT events are being cancelled or going online on an ad hoc basis. Contact the sponsoring organization for up-to-date details. Check the **Announcements** section of the CWRT's website for additional coming events.

Nov. 3rd, Kankakee Valley CWRT: John Horn on "The 39th Illinois Infantry in Virginia"

Nov. 5th, Northern Illinois CWRT: Wayne Rhine on "U.S. Marines"

Nov. 6th, Two Old Goats in Cedar Lake: Brian Conroy on "The Northwest Territory"

Nov. 9th, McHenry County CWRT: Don Hatch on "Road Trippin' Thru History"

Nov. 11th, Milwaukee CWRT: Tom Clemens on "Joseph K. Mansfield"

Nov. 16th, Lincoln-Davis CWRT: Rick Shaus on "Lee is Trapped"

Nov. 18th, South Suburban CWRT: Dennis Doyle on "Irish Brigade at Gettysburg"

Nov. 19th, Salt Creek CWRT: David Keller on "Command at Antietam"

Future Chicago CWRT Meetings

Dec. 10th: Dennis Doyle on *Illinois Regiments at Gettysburg*

Jan. 14th, 2021: Jen Murray on *General Meade*

Feb. 11th: Ann Durkin Keating on *Juliette Kinzie, the Civil War, and the Making of Chicago*

March 11th: Mark Laubacher on *The USS Red Rover: Hospital of Firsts*

Apr. 8th: Jeffrey Hunt on *Meade and Lee at Rappahannock Station and Mine Run*

May 13th: Dr. Thomas Carson on *Lincoln as Moral Exemplar*

June 10th: Lauren Szady on *TBD*

Books for Sale

Hello Chicago Round Table members, I am a 40-year member of the Milwaukee Round Table and I have several hundred good Civil War books available for sale. If you would like to receive a list please e-mail me at aoren@att.net. Thanks! Andy Oren

