

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



Volume LXXXIV, Number 5

Chicago, Illinois

January 2025

833rd REGULAR MEETING, Friday, January 10th, 2025

Bjorn Skaptason on *The Battle of Shiloh*

**Live/Zoom Meeting. Time: Jan. 10th, 2025, 07:30 PM CST.
Zoom Option ID 845 3227 1496; No Passcode needed**



At the outset of the Battle of Shiloh in April 1862, the Confederates had high hopes for an important strategic victory. They aimed to block the Union advance into Mississippi, and early in the battle, it seemed that they might succeed.

As night fell on the first day of battle, General Pierre G. T. Beauregard, who took command after General Albert Sidney Johnston was shot and died, believed his army was victorious. In what might have been his fatal error, he called a halt to the attacks as darkness approached.

What he didn't know was that, during the night, thousands of additional Union troops arrived to reinforce Ulysses S. Grant's battered army. By daybreak, Federal forces numbered nearly 54,000 men near Pittsburg Landing, an advantage of 24,000 men over Beauregard's army. The greater numbers, and the tactical advantage they provided, proved to be decisive.

Bjorn Skaptason holds degrees from the University of Kansas and Loyola University Chicago. He worked as a seasonal ranger at the National Park Service's Shiloh National Military Park and Corinth Civil War Interpretive Center for two summers while studying history at Loyola. Bjorn has published essays on Ambrose Bierce at Shiloh for the Ambrose Bierce Project Journal, on the United States Colored Troops in the campaign and battle of Brice's Crossroads for the West Tennessee Historical Society Papers, and

in the Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society on The Chicago Light Artillery. A dealer in antiquarian books, Bjorn produced and guest hosted "A House Divided," a live book discussion program webcast from Abraham Lincoln Book Shop in Chicago.

Battlefield Preservation

Dear:

Together, in 2024 we have...

- *Protected land at **our 160th site**, Goldsborough Bridge, a Civil War site in North Carolina.*
- *Sent our **50,000th child to visit a historic site** through the Field Trip Grant Fund, kindling a love of history in a new generation.*
- *Expanded our **groundbreaking Liberty Trail** concept outside of South Carolina, laying the groundwork for future digital guides that connect Revolutionary War sites in other states and across the nation.*
- *Pressed forward with a **lawsuit against Prince William County, Va.**, in the aftermath of a flawed rezoning process that cleared the way for the world's largest data center adjacent to Manassas National Battlefield Park.*
- *Finalized **landscape restoration** at Fredericksburg's Slaughter Pen Farm with demolition of the last remaining non-historic building.*
- *Celebrated the opening of Culpeper Battlefields State Park through the **first round of our land donations** to the Commonwealth of Virginia.*
- *Hit **100 million views on our YouTube channel** – where we post a new video, on average, every day and a half – and launched our podcast, Boom Goes the History.*
- *Faithfully recreated key scenes in Revolutionary War South Carolina in **augmented reality and installed “binocular-style” viewers** in Marion Square so visitors can envision the Horn Work that defended the city.*
- *Transferred a total of **178 acres into the perpetual care of the National Park System** — 26 acres at Saratoga National Historical Park, 93 at Mill Springs, seven at Fort Gregg (part of Richmond National Battlefields Park) and 52 acres*

at Hatcher's Run (part of Petersburg National Battlefield).

- *Kicked-off campaigns to acquire **crucial preservation "donut holes"** at two of the most famous Civil War sites – Gettysburg and Antietam.*
- *And much more!!*

The American Battlefield Trust

December Presentation

By Mark Matranga

Jon Sebastian spoke to The Civil War Round Table at its 864th Regular Meeting on December 13, 2024, giving an excellent presentation on "One Small Intensely Patriotic County," DuPage County, Illinois.

The area that became DuPage was primarily prairie, its land being approximately 85% prairie, 15% oak and other hardwood forest. Numerous indigenous peoples had lived in the area, the most recent being the Potawatomi. The first Europeans in the area settled in the southwest part of the county. Bailey Hobson and Joseph Naper were among the first settlers; in July 1832, Hobson developed a mill on the West Branch of the DuPage River in what became the Naper Settlement. Later, in May 1832, Pierce and Lucy Ann Downer set up residence in the area that now bears his name. Gary's Mill north of Wheaton was established in Fall 1832. The Fischer family established their farm in 1834. The oldest structure still extant in Northeast Illinois is their 1837 barn near the town of Churchville, now in Bensenville/Elmhurst area.

DuPage County was formed in February 1839, with Naperville as county seat, as part of a political compromise that moved the State Capitol to Springfield. At about that time, Warren and Jesse Wheaton, along with Erasmus Gary, began to develop the village of Wheaton; Warren donated land for the Illinois Institute, established in 1853; the school became Wheaton College in 1860, with Thomas Blanchard, an ardent abolitionist, its first president. Economic development accelerated with the coming of the railroad in 1849, when tracks for the Galena & Chicago Union Railroad developed by William B. Ogden were laid through Wheaton.

DuPage County's population at the time of the Civil War (14,701) largely originated in the northern states. It was predominantly Protestant and by the 1850's, anti-slavery with some abolitionist elements. Sebastian noted that although DuPage was among the

most abolitionist in the state that this sentiment did not necessarily translate into advocacy for Black civil rights. When the Underground Railroad eventually made its way to DuPage the Downer home and Wheaton College were stops.

DuPage County strongly favored the nomination of Lincoln, and when the war came eagerly supported his administration. Union sentiment in the county was best exemplified by the resolution of York Township which stated, “that every man in the township...who did not have the stars and stripes flying upon his premises...should be deemed a traitor and treated as such.” Sebastian gave numerous examples of those who displayed their loyalty: Several Blanchards from Downers Grove enlisted in Co. K, 13th Illinois Regiment, as did Charles Beckman and Merrit Hobson; The famous 8th Illinois Cavalry contained many DuPage residents, one of whom, Walter Kennicott, died at Falling Waters at the end of the Gettysburg Campaign; Frederick Fischer with the 33rd Illinois fought at the Railroad Redoubt at Vicksburg on May 22, 1863; Companies B, D, F, and I of the 105th regiment participated in the Atlanta Campaign; Augustus Fischer of the 105th died at Atlanta in August 1864. The 132nd Infantry was a 100-day regiment raised in 1864, when replacements were needed for veteran units whose enlistments had expired. Tyler Hemmingway, 72nd Infantry, became an officer in an African American regiment (30th USCT).

Brig. General Mason Brayman from Warrenville was a prominent attorney who revised and categorized all Illinois laws written up to 1844. He was Adjutant General to General McClelland; upon rallying the troops during the battle of Shiloh, the men of the 29th regiment called him “father.” He was later assigned to investigate the Fort Pillow massacre. Wells Howard Blodgett of Downers Grove won the Medal of Honor for his actions with the 37th Illinois at Newtonia, Missouri on September 30, 1862. George Houghton of the 104th Illinois also won the Medal of Honor.

Sebastian pointed out that 64% of eligible men served in the war; 62.6% of DuPage residents served. Approximately 80% were native born, with the remaining 20% predominantly of German background, with some Irish and a few French. DuPage County certainly rallied to the cause, its founding families contributing sons and brothers, many of whom later became prominent postwar figures in society and government. Sebastian presented an excellent panorama of an area growing from native settlement to a dynamic polity in the space of 30 years. Relying on extensive research and focusing on this one geographical entity, he related the pattern of European settlement and the establishment of institutions that ultimately supported the Union cause. Perhaps even more so, he created a template that others can use to document how the Upper Midwest reacted to our national crisis.



BULLETIN BOARD

Our in-person meetings are currently held at:

Holiday Inn Oakbrook

350 W 22nd St., Oakbrook Terrace

Parking at the Holiday Inn is FREE

Dinner \$50.00 Members and Non- Members

Cocktails at 5:30, Dinner at 6:30

Presentation only is \$10 per person.

January 10th, noon at the **Kenosha Civil War Museum**, Dick Zimmermann will present "William B. Britton and His Adventurous Life with the 8th Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry (The Eagle Regiment)"

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

At 1:15 p.m. on January 23rd, **Bruce Allardice** will present "Hollywood's Civil War Movies" to the Weinger JCC in Northbrook.

More Upcoming Local Civil War Events

- Jan. 3rd, 2025: Northern Illinois CWRT: Gordon Ramsey on "Civil War Music"
- Jan. 6th, Rock Valley CWRT: Jon McGinty on "Fort Jefferson and the Dry Tortugas"
- Jan. 9th, Milwaukee CWRT: Bjorn Skaptason on "Shiloh"
- Jan. 12th, Northern Indiana CWRT: Tom Vojinski on "9th Indiana Infantry"
- Jan. 14th, Southwest Michigan CWRT: Brian Rhinehart on "I Have a Civil War Ancestor.... Now What?"
- Jan. 14th, McHenry County CWRT: Chuck Rebesco on "Sam Carroll's Gibraltar Brigade"
- Jan. 21st, Lincoln-Davis CWRT: William Griffing on "Spared and Shared"
- Jan. 23rd, South Suburban CWRT: Charlie Banks, topic TBA
- Jan. 25th, **Chicago CWRT Executive Committee Meeting**, at "Camp Girardi"

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

Future Chicago CWRT Meetings

Feb. 14th: Hampton Newsome on "Gettysburg's Southern Front"

Mar. 14th: Gerry Prokopowicz on TBA

Apr. 9th (Wednesday): Phil Spaugy on "The 19th Indiana and the Iron Brigade"

May 9th: Steve Phan on "Asian and Pacific Islanders During the Civil War"

June 13th: Dave Powell (Nevins-Freeman Award) on "Lost Opportunities in the Atlanta Campaign"

Sept. 12th: James Pula on "Dan Butterfield"

Oct. 10th: Kim Harris as "Libby Custer"

The **Abraham Lincoln Book Shop's** facebook page airs "Take a Break with History", every first and third Friday of the month at 1 pm CST. On January 8th at 3:30 CST Alan Taylor will speak on his new book, [American Civil Wars](#). On January 16th, same time, Jeffrey Boutwell will talk about his new biography of George Sewall Boutwell.

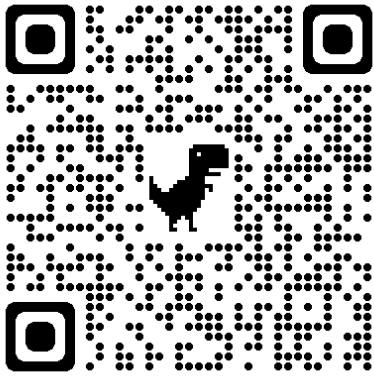
For more, visit <https://alincolnbookshop.com/>

Reminder—The **2025 Annual Battlefield Tour** (Shiloh and Corinth) is April 23-27, 2025. The registration form is on our website.

SHILOH UPDATE: For those who will be flying into Memphis for the Shiloh Tour, we request that you contact Mark Matranga at (312) 286-3325, or markpmatranga@gmail.com. As set forth in the tour registration form, there are no plans to provide a shuttle to and from the airport to the hotel at Pickwick Landing. This was also discussed at the recent meeting, with the suggestion that those flying can pool together on transportation from the airport.

In order to facilitate this, the tour will need contact information for those flying so that we can identify those individuals who can in turn pool together to reserve transportation.

In the past this was done informally where no shuttle available. Here we intend to create a list of those planning on attending the tour and flying. As soon as we have contact information from individuals in this group, we will communicate with them so that they can plan their travel.



CWRT Website QR Code