

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



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834th REGULAR MEETING, Friday, February 14th, 2025

Hampton Newsome on *Gettysburg's Southern Front*

**Live/Zoom Meeting. Time: Feb. 14th, 2025, 07:30 PM CST.
Zoom Option ID 845 3227 1496; No Passcode needed**



On June 14, 1863, US Major General John Adams Dix received the following directive from General-in-Chief Henry Halleck: "All your available force should be concentrated to threaten Richmond, by seizing and destroying their railroad bridges over the South and North Anna Rivers, and do them all the damage possible." With General Robert E. Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia marching toward Gettysburg and only a limited Confederate force guarding Richmond, Halleck sensed a rare opportunity for the Union cause.

In response, Dix, who had lived a life of considerable public service but possessed limited military experience, gathered his men and began a slow advance. During the ensuing operation, 20,000 US troops would threaten the Confederate capital and seek to cut the railroads supplying Lee's army in Pennsylvania. To some, Dix's campaign presented a tremendous chance for US forces to strike hard at Richmond while Lee was off in Pennsylvania. To others, it was an unnecessary lark that tied up units deployed more effectively in protecting Washington and confronting Lee's men on Northern soil.

Hampton Newsome's presentation, "Gettysburg's Southern Front," points to the often-unrecognized value in examining events of the US Civil War beyond the larger famous battles and campaigns. In fact, the Dix Campaign may rank as one of the Union war

effort's more compelling lost opportunities in the East, one that could have changed the course of the conflict.

Hampton Newsome is an independent author who lives in Charlottesville, Virginia. In addition to the award-winning Gettysburg's Southern Front, he is author of The Fight for the Old North State and Richmond Must Fall: The Richmond-Petersburg Campaign, October 1864, a study of Grant's and Lee's battles in the weeks before the 1864 election. He is also a co-editor of Civil War Talks: Further Reminiscences of George S. Bernard and His Fellow Veterans (UVA Press; 2012) along with John Selby and our CWRT's John Horn.

Battlefield Preservation

Some preservation projects are so ambitious that they require cooperative effort from all levels of government – federal, state and local – alongside the nonprofit sector to come to fruition. And in the case of our recent project at Nashville's Fort Negley, that's on top of a past quest for public recognition and a pitched advocacy battle!

Nashville is a thriving city, with real estate prices to match. But when you hear the fascinating history of this remarkable 2.36-acre property, you'll understand why so many partners banded together to assemble its \$9.5 million purchase price! In addition to an approximately \$4.1 million federal matching grant and \$2.3 million from the Tennessee Civil War Battlefield Fund, Metro Nashville contributed \$3 million for the acquisition – on top of some \$12 million being put toward a master plan to stabilize the fort itself and upgrade existing park infrastructure. With such allies at the table, the Trust's financial contribution was comparatively small, but our expertise was instrumental in facilitating such a complex and nuanced transaction.

Today, as we mark the 160th anniversary of the Battle of Nashville, [we are thrilled to declare victory on this key project at Fort Negley](#), whose guns fired the salvo that signaled the start of that engagement.

Built by Union forces during the Civil War, Fort Negley may not have played a decisive role in combat for control of the city, but it has become a major Nashville touchpoint in the decades since.

After the city of Nashville fell to the Union in February 1862, Black men, women and children, dubbed "contrabands," flocked to Nashville in hopes of freedom and fair wages.

In the wake of 1950s Urban Renewal policy, the historic fort structure – all that remained of the Union defenses that once encircled the city – fell into disrepair. A baseball stadium for the minor league Nashville Sounds was built within Fort Negley's historic boundaries in the 1970s.

By the early 2000s, a resurgence of interest in the fort led to major municipal investment, and the opening of Fort Negley Park. But in 2014 the Sounds' stadium was demolished, the team having moved to a new area of the city and a massive mixed-use development proposal put the historic landscape in jeopardy. The plan drew the ire of council members and local and national nonprofits, including the American Battlefield Trust and the Cultural Landscape Foundation, to lend support to the historical site's cause. Thankfully, that project was scrapped, with Fort Negley nominated as the first American site for the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Slave Route Project in 2019.

Today, Fort Negley faces a far brighter future, with more land preserved and work about to begin on the \$12 million Phase One of an ambitious master plan for infrastructure improvements, new interpretation and visitor service upgrades.

The ongoing preservation efforts at Fort Negley stand as a testament to collaborative public-private partnerships that can and should be used as a lesson in future preservation efforts.

We can only fulfill our mission at the Trust through the stalwart support of our friends and donors and know that our victories are your victories.

'Til the battle is won.

David Duncan, President, American Battlefield Trust

January Presentation

By Mark Matranga

Bjorn Skaptason offered an intriguing preview of The Civil War Round Table's upcoming Battlefield Tour at its 833rd regular meeting on January 10, 2025, "Chicago at Shiloh." In his talk, Skaptason offered capsule histories of units and individuals with local backgrounds who fought at Shiloh on April 6 and 7, 1862. Illinois contributed some 27 infantry regiments, 9 batteries of artillery, and approximately a dozen battalions and companies of Illinois cavalry to the Army of the Tennessee, in an army of 48,000 soldiers. Chicago's were prominent on the battlefield.

Skaptason pointed out that Chicago's most recognizable unit, the Chicago Light Artillery, had its start in the pre-war years when the public was caught up in what he terms '*rage militaire*,' popularized by Ellsworth's Zouaves. But Ezra Taylor, later to be Sherman's artillery division commander, organized a disciplined group of men, initially 45, whose numbers increased to 150 at the start of the war. Taylor was a driving force behind the formation of the Chicago Light Artillery. Skaptason described the types of men he recruited for artillery: tradesmen and artisans whose skills commended them to

maintaining and operating cannon; infantry units were largely composed of blue-collar workers and farmers.

Company A, 1st Illinois Light Artillery (Willard's Battery) under Lt. Peter Wood, served the army well at Shiloh, protecting the Union left with General MacArthur at the Peach Orchard. One of its officers. Other companies of the 1st Illinois Light Artillery saw heavy action with Sherman's division, most significantly Barrett's (Taylor's) Company B at Shiloh Church and Company E (Waterhouse) above Shiloh Branch in the early phase of the battle.

Regarding MacArthur, the General was a former blacksmith who recruited his fellow Scotsmen into the Highland Guards. Three companies of Scots were integrated with troops from Galena and Rockford and later mustered in at Camp Douglas in Chicago as the 12th Infantry Regiment. The 12th Illinois saw significant action on the Union left on April 6th as part of MacArthur's brigade.

Another brigade commander, David Stuart, had been a Michigan politician who left that state for Illinois under rather compromising circumstances. It is not clear Stuart intended to serve, but as a Democrat and a Scot, he volunteered when Governor Yates called for more volunteers. Units Stuart had recruited were part of what was called the 'Douglas Brigade' and eventually mustered in as the 55th Illinois Infantry Regiment. By April 1862 Stuart was elevated to brigade command under General Sherman. His brigade, with the 55th Illinois, 54th and 71st Ohio, was posted in an isolated yet vital position on the far left of the Union position along the Hamburg-Savannah Road above the Locust Grove Branch. This small brigade of approximately 800 men fought a three-hour delaying action against two Confederate brigades which prevented the envelopment of the Union left. Eventually compelled to fall back, Stuart's units retreated into the series of deep ravines characteristic of that part of the battlefield, suffering substantial casualties as they deliberately halted and engaged the enemy as they moved northward. General Sherman recommended Stuart for brigadier general, but the Senate, aware of Stuart's reputation, would not approve the promotion. Skaptason considered Stuart a good commander, but denied this opportunity, the Scotsman resigned his commission.

As the 55th with Stuart was retreating, MacArthur's Brigade moved to its support in the Peach Orchard and along the Savannah Road adjacent to the ravines. Taylor's Battery took position with the 12th Illinois, firing point blank into the advancing Confederates. As more force was applied in the Peach Orchard, the brigade moved back to Bloody Pond where the artillery took numerous casualties and retreated to Pittsburg Landing.

The 57th Illinois was another Illinois unit mustered in at Camp Douglas but was composed of only half of Chicago men. Initially held in reserve, the 57th saw limited and unfortunate service under Colonel Baldwin (W.H.L. Wallace's Division) in the Hornet's

Nest position where it was routed. It fell back to the Final Line, and rallied on Battery A. Skaptason reminded the group that the 57th had better fortune in October 1862 at Corinth.

Bjorn Skaptason has a deep understanding of the campaign and battle of Shiloh and the men who fought it, and who will guide The Round Table on its Annual Battlefield Tour in April. He reminds us that “fans of the Civil War want to hear the same stories over and over, the same way.” But he adds that historians will look for “new stories,” knowing the basics of the story always will be the same. This Bjorn does very well.



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.

February 14th, noon at the **Kenosha Civil War Museum**, James M. Cornelius will present “What Did Lincoln Know About Science, and Did It Matter?”

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

More Upcoming Local Civil War Events

Feb. 7th, Northern Illinois CWRT: Father Bob Miller on "Civilian Life in Vicksburg"

Feb. 11th, McHenry County CWRT: Dan Masters on "Hell by the Acre: Stones River Campaign"

Feb. 11th, Southwest Michigan CWRT: Ted Chamberlain on "Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain"

Feb. 13th, Milwaukee CWRT: Hampton Newsome on "Gettysburg's Southern Front"

Feb. 15th, Salt Creek CWRT: Bruce Allardice on “Loose Lips: Military Secrecy in the Civil War”

Feb. 16th, Northern Indiana CWRT: Chuck Rebesco on "The Gallant 14th"

Feb. 18th, Lincoln-Davis CWRT: Bill Mitchell on "Lincoln's Leadership"
Feb. 27th, South Suburban CWRT: Dennis Doyle on "Cold Harbor--1864"

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

Future Chicago CWRT Meetings

Mar. 14th: Gerry Prokopowicz on "Civil War Talk Radio"

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 February 6th at 3:30 CST Bennett Parten will speak on his new book, [Somewhere Toward Freedom](#).

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.

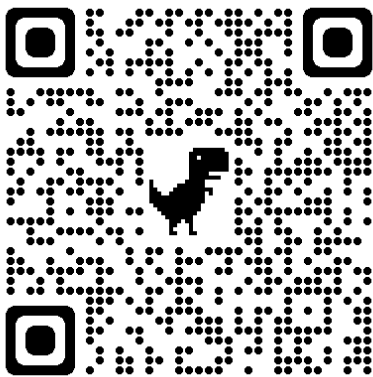
In the past this was done informally where no shuttle available. Here we intend to create a list of those planning on attending the tour and flying. As soon as we have

contact information from individuals in this group, we will communicate with them so that they can plan their travel.

January Board Meeting changes.

New Venue Location for 2025-2026: The Blossom Cafe and Banquet: 8349 West Lawrence Avenue, Norridge Dinner Fee for 2025-2026: \$45 per person per monthly meeting. This will be a plated dinner, for less money than currently.

Nevins-Freeman Awardee's: 2026: Wayne Motts (Gettysburg Foundation) and for 2027: Doug Dammann (Kenosha CW Museum)



CWRT Website QR Code