

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



Volume LXXXIV, Number 7

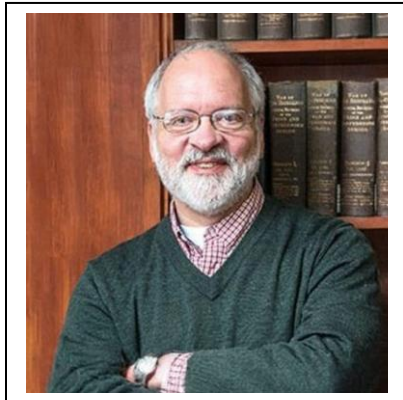
Chicago, Illinois

March 2025

835th REGULAR MEETING, Friday, March 14th, 2025

Gerald Prokopowicz on *Civil War Talk Radio*

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



For more than twenty years, the weekly podcast “Civil War Talk Radio” has featured hundreds of authors, curators, collectors, re-enactors, musicians, and other students of Civil War history, giving in-depth interviews about their work. Today, if you have to make conversation with someone you haven’t seen in a while, a safe opening is “Love your podcast!” since everyone and their cousin seems to have one. But in 2004, the word “podcast” had just been invented. How did “Civil War Talk Radio” get started so long ago? Who listens to

it? Who gets to appear on it? More important, how have CWTR and other digital media reflected and influenced the world of Civil War scholarship? History professor Gerry Prokopowicz, who has hosted the show since 2004, shares stories from Civil War Talk Radio’s past, reflects on the evolution of Civil War scholarship in the past two decades, and offers observations on the potential for CWTR and similar podcasts to provide oases of scholarly discourse, in an online world increasingly infiltrated by AI and disinformation.

Gerald J. Prokopowicz is a professor of history at East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina, where he teaches military history and public history. He is the author of *Did Lincoln Own Slaves? And Other FAQ about Abraham Lincoln* and *All for the Regiment: The Army of the Ohio, 1861-1862*. Before coming to ECU, he served for nine years as the resident Lincoln Scholar at the Lincoln Museum, in Fort Wayne, Indiana,

where he helped create the award-winning exhibit, “Abraham Lincoln and the American Experiment,” and edited *Lincoln Lore*. Since 2004 he has hosted “Civil War Talk Radio” (www.impedimentsofwar.org), the oldest longest continuously running history-related podcast. In addition to teaching, writing, and talk Civil War history, he enjoys leading battlefield tours, playing old-time fiddle tunes, and cheering for his hometown Detroit sports teams.

Battlefield Preservation

Dear ____:

Today, we face a battle of our own—not with cannons and muskets, but with petitions, court filings, and the unwavering determination to defend America’s sacred ground.

The historic Manassas Battlefield, where soldiers fought and fell during the Civil War, is under siege—not by armies, but by corporations eager to build the *world’s largest* data center campus.

Thirty-seven massive data centers sprawling over land three times the size of Disneyland, threaten to smother the very ground where American history was written.

This isn’t just any land. It’s where the Second Battle of Manassas raged in 1862—a battle that saw unimaginable courage and devastating loss. One historian described part of the battlefield as a “whirlpool of death,” where entire regiments were nearly wiped out. The 21st Georgia, for example, lost 184 of its 242 men in a single night.

We cannot allow their sacrifice to be buried under concrete and steel.

And it isn’t just Manassas; the Wilderness, Brandy Station and many other battlefields are also threatened.

That’s why **the American Battlefield Trust has filed an appeal with the Virginia Court of Appeals to overturn the reckless decision** that greenlit this development.

But this legal battle is fierce, and we cannot win it alone. We need your help in holding the line against impinging development!

‘Til the battle is won.

David Duncan, President, American Battlefield Trust

February Presentation

By Mark Matranga

Hampton Newsome addressed The Civil War Round Table at its 834th Regular Meeting on February 14, 2025, on *Gettysburg's Southern Front*, an examination of the June 1863 campaign undertaken by Major General John Dix, an operation designed to threaten Richmond and to interdict the lines of supply supporting Robert E. Lee's invasion into Pennsylvania. Newsome presented the thesis that this offensive represented an opportunity for a dramatic turn of events at that point in the war and also offered a detailed insight into one of the many campaigns of the war that have received little attention to date.

Early June 1863 was a time fraught with anxiety in Washington City. The Lincoln administration, still reeling from the disastrous results of the battle at Chancellorsville, was now faced with yet another movement by General Lee across the Potomac. In addition to ordering the Army of the Potomac into Maryland to follow Lee, General-in-Chief Henry Halleck looked to the Departments of Virginia, North Carolina, and West Virginia to coordinate a larger strategic effort to strike at the enemy's rail lines. The largest and most important was that of General Dix which was aimed at a lightly defended Richmond and Lee's supply lines north.

On June 14, 1863, General Dix received orders from General Halleck that he should gather "All your available force," then located primarily on the Peninsula near Fort Monroe, with certain forces up the York River. Dix moved by transport to White House at the confluence of the Pamunkey and Mattaponi Rivers and concentrated his force of 20,000; from there, per orders, he was to 'threaten Richmond by seizing and destroying their railroad bridges over the South and North Anna River, and to do them as much damage as possible."

Operations began with a cavalry operation that destroyed the Virginia Central bridge over the South Anna. Dix's force was comprised of two wings, Keyes' IV Corps and the larger VII Corps which Dix led himself, up the York River to White House. Keyes with the smaller force moved toward Richmond and was charged with containing confederate reinforcements coming out of Richmond; the VII Corps aimed north for the Richmond, Fredericksburg & Potomac bridge over the South Anna. Once Dix reduced the VII Corps by detaching sizeable portions for guarding its rear, its striking power was lost. Meanwhile, Keyes' advance was stopped by D.H. Hill's attack near Crump's Crossroads some 15 miles east of the Confederate capital.

The move on Richmond and the railroads in the end amounted to a massive cavalry raid that accomplished little, in part due to a rather conservative approach on the part of Dix and his commanders and an aggressive stance by D.H. Hill, whose reputation has generally suffered at the hands of historians. In fairness to the Union troops, they were

relatively inexperienced, and the 'hard hand of war' did not fit Dix's approach to warfare; rather, he took a McClellan type approach to destruction of civilian property and was reluctant to promote emancipation, despite slaves joining the federal ranks and otherwise assisting their efforts.

In the end, Dix's operations were not successful. Richmond remained secure; Lee's northward movement was not thwarted. A onetime-regular army officer with a distinguished record in public service did not make him a creative military commander. In retrospect, the raids against the bridges, the Warsaw tracks, and the Wytheville depot were not unlike other such incidents in a long war. And as Newsome points out, Halleck's larger effort also failed to achieve lasting results due to poor management and execution. Halleck understandably had other perhaps more urgent matters to consider, but a larger troop commitment would have enhanced the prospect for success. An idea with great potential was left unfulfilled. But Newsome should be congratulated for presenting an in-depth look at this previously obscure campaign. Indeed, The Round Table recognized the value of his contribution by awarding Newsome its Bearss Book Award.



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.

March 14th, noon at the **Kenosha Civil War Museum**, Dave Wieggers will present "Early Women Sculptors of Abraham Lincoln"

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

Bruce Allardice will be busy in March. He's speaking March 15 at the Zion-Benton Library, to the Lake County Genealogical Society, on "Private Yankee Doodle: Five Myths about George Washington's Army;" on March 18 he presents "Baseball During the Civil War" to the Twin Cities CWRT; March 22nd he'll present "Loose Lips: Military Secrecy and the Civil War" at the Whiting Public Library; and on March 23rd, the

Downers Grove Historical Society will hear him speak on "Early Baseball in Downers Grove."

On March 7, at Del Webb, Huntley, **Rob Girardi** will speak on "The Great Awakening: The Civil War in 1862."

More Upcoming Local Civil War Events

Mar. 7th, Northern Illinois CWRT: Jan Rasmussen on "The Dakota War"

Mar. 9th, Northern Indiana CWRT: Jon Sebastian on "Indiana Regiments in the 1864 Shenandoah Valley Campaign"

Mar. 11th, McHenry County CWRT: Charlie Banks on "Confederate Railroads (Part II)"

Mar. 11th, Southwest Michigan CWRT: TBA

Mar. 13th, Milwaukee CWRT: Gerry Prokopowicz on "Civil War Talk Radio"

Mar. 15th, Salt Creek CWRT: William T. Kolasinski on "Alan Pinkerton"

Mar. 18th, Lincoln-Davis CWRT: Scott Dominiak on "Lincoln's Spiritual Journey"

Mar. 27th, South Suburban CWRT: Andy Partak and Tim Marcus on "Camp Goodell"

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

Future Chicago CWRT Meetings

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"

Nov. 14th: Chris Kolakowski, topic TBA

Dec. 12th: Brian Jordan, topic TBA

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.

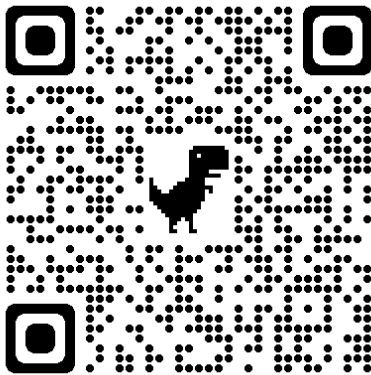
For more, visit <https://alincolnbookshop.com/>

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

On Saturday, June 21st, at Valparaiso, Indiana, an **Indiana State Historical marker** will be dedicated to Dr. Almira Fifield, a Civil War nurse. Contact Diane Schweitzer at Diane1224@comcast.net for more information

Our own **Rev. Bob Miller** stars in a 50+ Minute documentary film he did about faith in the Civil War, and seven Catholic chaplains in that war. All seven were part of the Catholic Rosecrans' Army of the Cumberland between Nov 1862 – Nov 1863. It's available for free at this link on Vimeo. <https://vimeo.com/838457780>

Bob also has a new book coming out April 1st. In *Faith of the Fathers*, Reverend Robert J. Miller examines the lives of 126 priest-chaplains—every Catholic priest who served during the Civil War. People can order in advance now at Amazon or at Notre Dame Press itself.



CWRT Website QR Code