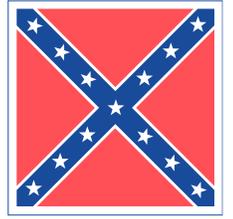


# THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

Founded December 3, 1940



Volume LXXVIII, Number 10

Chicago, Illinois

June 2018

## Dennis Rasbach on "Joshua Chamberlain and the Petersburg Campaign"



Joshua Chamberlain is the focus of much recent historical attention—and some controversy. The professor-turned-soldier from Maine is most famous for his defense of Little Round Top and counterattack down its slopes, though a number of historians question Chamberlain's role in actually ordering the bayonet charge and other details of the fight. Perhaps second to Little Round Top in the Chamberlain legend is his June 18, 1864, attack at Petersburg, in which Chamberlain, sword in one hand and brigade flag in the other, was shot through the pelvis. Most everyone pronounced the wound mortal, prompting U. S. Grant to issue him a battlefield promotion to brigadier general, but Chamberlain lived on another fifty years before dying from complications related to the old injury.

soon to become Confederate-held Fort Mahone. According to author Dennis Rasbach's new study, none of this is true. An overwhelming body of evidence, much of it derived from Chamberlain himself, demonstrates he actually attacked a different part of the Confederate line nearly a mile away.

Dr. Dennis Rasbach became interested in his ancestor's unit during the Civil War. In the course of his research, he realized the 21st Pennsylvania (Dismounted) fought in a brigade from the same division as that of Gettysburg hero Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain. He figured, naturally enough, that if he read about Chamberlain's Brigade at Petersburg, he'd also be able to find out where his ancestor's

unit fought. He quickly realized, however, that Chamberlain's own account from 30 years after the war didn't really match up with many other accounts from the division as a whole. After some seriously intense research Rasbach knew he had an interesting topic on his hands, and decided to write a book. That book, Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain and the Petersburg Campaign: His Supposed Charge from Fort Hell, his Near-Mortal Wound, and a Civil War Myth Reconsidered, was released by publisher Savas Beatie in 2016.



### 773rd REGULAR MEETING

★★★★★

Friday, June 8th

★★★★★

HOLIDAY INN O'HARE

5615 N. CUMBERLAND, CHICAGO

*Cocktails at 5:30 p.m.*

*Dinner at 6:30 p.m.*

**\$40 - Members/Non-members**

**ENTRÉE  
BUFFET STYLE.**

## PRESERVATION NEWS - CIVIL WAR TRUST FORMS AMERICAN BATTLEFIELD TRUST

The American Battlefield Trust seeks to preserve our nation's hallowed battlegrounds and educate the public about what happened there and why it matters today. We permanently protect these battlefields for future generations as a lasting and tangible memorial to the brave soldiers who fought in the American Revolution, the War of 1812, and the Civil War.

The new nonprofit umbrella organization builds upon a 30-year record of exemplary work done by the Civil War Trust and its predecessor organizations. The Civil War Trust and Revolutionary War Trust (which began in 2014 as Campaign 1776) are the two divisions beneath the American Battlefield Trust banner, focused on preserving the battlefields and perpetuating the memory of those formative conflicts in U.S. history.

The formation of the American Battlefield Trust is the latest step in the evolution of the modern battlefield preservation movement, which began in the mid-1980s in response to the loss of important historic sites to spreading commercial and residential development. The new entity is a direct descendant, through a series of mergers and name changes, of the Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites, founded by a group of professional historians and preservation advocates in 1987.

The organization is best known for its high-profile battlefield preservation efforts, including protection of the historic epicenter of the Antietam battlefield, the site of George

Washington's famous charge at Princeton, the Slaughter Pen Farm at Fredericksburg, and Robert E. Lee's battlefield headquarters at Gettysburg. In addition, as the Civil War Trust, it engaged in grassroots campaigns to prevent development at Chancellorsville and the Wilderness in Virginia; Franklin, Tennessee; and Morris Island, South Carolina (site of the famous charge portrayed in the movie *Glory*).

"Over those years and under a variety of names, we have saved nearly 50,000 acres of battlefield land throughout the United States, while earning accolades for being one of the most efficient and effective nonprofits in the nation," Trust President James Lighthizer said. "Now, as the American Battlefield Trust, we will continue that tradition of preservation leadership."

**Seminary Ridge**—"I recently shared one of the biggest Civil War preservation opportunities we have had in recent years: an eight-month campaign to save Seminary Ridge at Gettysburg.

This initiative – an effort of the Civil War Trust under the American Battlefield Trust umbrella – will be no small feat. Due to the location of the land, we are unable to apply for our usual matching grants. So I'm asking you to help save this crucial part of history and raise the \$3.5 million needed to preserve these 18 acres.

This land witnessed fierce fighting on July 1, 1863. Here, in the late afternoon, Union troops made a final, desperate defense of Seminary Ridge and were met with a renewed attack from the Confederates.

### THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



Founded December 3, 1940  
1039 Hinswood  
Darien, Illinois 60561  
Phone: 630-460-1865  
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](mailto:editor@chicagocwrt.org).



Historians, including Jim McPherson, Gary Gallagher and Bob Krick, have lauded our effort to save this land - many calling it among the most historically significant land at Gettysburg still in private hands. ...

Every inch of these 18 acres is covered with undeniable history. I hope you'll agree with me when I say that should be protected so current and future generations can understand the costliest battle ever on American soil, and preserve the land where hundreds of troops made the ultimate sacrifice.

Remarkably, this parcel is relatively unchanged from its wartime appearance, thanks to meticulous stewardship by the United Lutheran Seminary. However, its future as an open space cannot be guaranteed. This is why I am asking you to help contribute to the effort to protect it, forever.

Because without Seminary Ridge, you cannot tell the full story of Gettysburg, and without Gettysburg, you cannot tell the full story of the Civil War.

Jim Lighthizer, President,  
The Civil War Trust"

## MAY MEETING

By Mark Matranga

Joseph Rose addressed The Civil War Round Table at its 772nd Regular Meeting on May 11, 2018. His talk, "Grant Under Fire: An Expose of Generalship and Character in the American Civil War" stirred vigorous debate, as Rose posited that Grant's reputation as a great military commander is undeserved. Rose finds Grant's Memoirs self-serving in comparison to contemporary accounts and correspondence which reveal manifest errors which his post-war writing either glossed over or neglected. Rose has combed the sources to find those instances where the historical record does not support Grant's version of events or where his deficiencies as a commander are revealed. This causes him to argue that Grant displayed a flawed character when he showed favoritism, tolerated corruption, or attempted to cover up his mistakes.

Rose does not ignore Grant's achievements, but does not accept the idea that Grant 'won' the war. He considers other factors - the influence of John Rawlins, the role of naval power, luck in the form of Grierson's Raid, among others. - which boosted his fortunes. His *Memoirs* relate that he had no political support in his rise, but without Elihu Washburne, Rose states, Grant might have 'disappeared' in the war.

Rose cited a litany of instances where Grant either took unwanted credit for victories or later distorted the historical record in the Memoirs: He claimed a "most complete victory" at Belmont where he had lost control of his command; at Fort Henry, Grant ignored Andrew Foote's advice, arrived late, permitting the garrison's escape, but was given sole credit for the victory when it was the brown water navy that secured it; after Fort Donelson he pushed Foote to prematurely attack a position of which he had little knowledge, and later, in his memoirs, neglected to mention the key role Lew Wallace played in the union

victory. He notes also the corruption of Grant's quartermaster at Cairo and the favoritism he displayed in steering the investigation into fraud within his command.

At Shiloh, Grant stayed well downstream in Savannah while his troops massed at Pittsburg Landing, and once the battle began, failed to order Wallace to the front and then gave Wallace conflicting and confusing orders. The *Memoirs* made Wallace out to be the scapegoat and virtually ignored Buell's contribution. Rose accused Grant of poor memory when after the war he forgot his order to 'hold at all hazards' and attributed the capture of Prentiss's command in the Hornet's Nest to the general's failure to promptly fall back. Despite Grant's allegation that he spent the first day at Shiloh visiting his division commanders and dispensing orders, the generals failed to support that contention.

Most notably, Rose claims that Grant conspired to deprive General John McClernand of the command President Lincoln had promised that general. Instead, in an act of insubordination, he sent Sherman downriver to Chicksaw Bluffs, where he was rebuffed, leaving no troops for McClernand to lead. Grant improperly blamed the navy for the failure to gain the rear of Vicksburg, and expropriated credit for having the navy pass in front of Vicksburg, the idea of others.

At Chattanooga, although Thomas and Baldy Smith had already established the cracker line, Grant stated that he gave the order to institute the operation. He also misstated actions at Missionary Ridge, fabricating a battle plan and claiming credit for success which resulted despite his orders. Last, Rose raised the 'butcher' question based on Grant's failing to secure a cease fire at Cold Harbor.

That Grant had flaws is not debatable. However, it would seem that these

affected him far greater in his pre-war career and after his presidency: Grant's troubles with alcohol and a naïve trust in those close around him caused him professional, financial, and personal ruin both before and after the Civil War. But during the war, and certainly with Rawlins' (who, incidentally, Grant promoted to general and made his Secretary of War) guidance, he stayed focused. Grant made many errors early in the war, as did others. That his army was surprised at Shiloh (most notably Sherman), that he conspired to thwart an otherwise competent corps commander, that he maligned Wallace and Thomas, settled scores, and ignored the contributions of others in the Memoirs, all are attributable to Grant.

Perhaps Grant's generalship has been rated higher by current historians than by previous generations. But in considering Kenneth Williams's Lincoln Finds a General, one must concede that Grant was one of the primary architects of union victory. The general the president was looking for was probably not John McClernand.



### 2018 ED BEARSS AWARD DONORS

At our Atlanta tour the CWRT's Ed Bearss Fund donated \$2,000 to Ed to give to the Battlefield Preservation project he thought most deserving. As in the past, donors are listed below:

Mary Abroe, Chuck Adams, Bruce Allardice and Leslie Goddard, Jerry and Ellen Allen, Nancy Bates, William Berls, Marsha Boblitz, Jean Cairns, Kurt Carlson, Terry Carr, Jim Cunningham, Randy Doler, Lori Duginski, Paul Estes, Bob and Micaela Gibson, Rob Girardi, Michael Glickman, Cindy Heckler, John Killey, Tom and Rosemarie King, Janet Linhart, Mark Matranga, Jim Patterson, Ginny Procnier, Roger Rudich, Brian Seiter, Muriel Underwood and Jackie Wilson.

## GRAPESHOT



The **Civil War Museum** of Kenosha, WI, will be celebrating its 10th Anniversary on Saturday, June 23. A schedule of performances, concerts and events is listed below.

- 10:15-11a You Are A Soldier. First person portrayal.  
 11:15-12p The Battlefield Balladeers.  
 12:10p-1p Cordelia Harvey-First Lady of Wisconsin. First person portrayal.  
 1:10-2p Harriet Tubman-My Untold Story performed by Kathryn Harris.  
 2:10-3p My Little Red Canoe. My Little Red Canoe is Keryn Moriyah & Lia McCoo; two accomplished singers  
 3:30-4:30p The Kenosha Pops.

Information on all Civil War Museum programs is available at (262) 653-4140 or [www.thecivilwarmuseum.org](http://www.thecivilwarmuseum.org).

On June 1st **Rob Girardi** will present "Civil War Generals" to the Cobb County (GA) CWRT. On July 26th he'll speak on "Civil War Corps Command" to the Richmond, KY CWRT.

**Leslie Goddard** will portray Louisa May Alcott, Civil War Nurse, June 26th at the Indian Prairie Public Library in Darien, July 18th at the Niles Library, and elsewhere in the Chicago Area.

For more information, visit her website at [www.lesliegoddard.info](http://www.lesliegoddard.info).

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

### PLEASE NOTE

Make your reservations by Sunday, June 3, by emailing [dinnerreservations@chicagocwrt.org](mailto:dinnerreservations@chicagocwrt.org), or calling 630 460-1865 with the names of your party.

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

- June 1st, Northern Illinois CWRT: Annual Banquet, featuring Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln (Max and Donna Daniels)  
 June 6th, Kankakee Valley CWRT: Party  
 June 7th, Springfield/Macoupin County CWRT: Kathleen Heyworth on "Camp Butler"  
 June 7th, Milwaukee CWRT: Dennis Rasbach on "Joshua Chamberlain and the Petersburg Campaign"  
 June 12th, McHenry County CWRT: Frank Crawford on "Worden's Battalion"  
 June 14th, Springfield/Macoupin County CWRT: Larry Werline and Bob Davis present "29th US Colored Troops"  
 June 15th, Salt Creek CWRT: Annual Banquet, featuring Steve Acker on "Gettysburg: The Living Memorial"  
 June 19th, Lincoln-Davis CWRT: Mark Smith on "Battles of Aversboro and Fayetteville"

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.

### Bulletin Board



### FUTURE MEETINGS

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

Sept. 14th: Tim Smith, "U. S. Grant and the Vicksburg Campaign"

Oct. 12th: Ted Karamanski, "The Civil War as an Indian War"

Nov. 9th: TBD

Dec. 14th: David Hirsch and Dan Van Haften on "Abraham Lincoln and the Structure of Reason"

### AUTHOR'S VOICE

The next Author's Voice event starts at 5 pm, June 7, with Bjorn Skaptasen interviewing author Kristopher A. Teters about his new book, Practical Liberators, a look at the attitudes and convictions of Union Army officers about Emancipation as the Civil War progressed.

Visit <http://alincolnbookshop.com/> for more information.

### UPCOMING CWRT ELECTIONS IN JUNE

The Chicago CWRT will hold its annual election of officers at the June meeting. Any eligible member is encouraged to attend and vote. The Nomination Committee will present a slate of candidates. As always, nominations from the floor are welcomed.

## **CIVIL WAR EVENTS THIS SUMMER**

- June 21st, Springfield/Macoupin County CWRT: Brian Schmidt presents  
“Medal of Honor Recipient Samuel Hymer”
- June 23rd: Battlefield Balladeers perform at Kenosha Civil War Museum
- June 28th, Springfield/Macoupin County CWRT: Sam Wheeler on  
“How Illinoisans Remember the Civil War”
- June 30th-July 1st: Battlefield Balladeers perform at Lake County Discovery Museum  
Civil War Days, Wauconda
- July 5th, Springfield/Macoupin County CWRT: John Alexander on  
“Grant Goes to War”
- July 10th, McHenry County CWRT: Steve Acker on “Gettysburg in Memorial”
- July 12th, Springfield/Macoupin County CWRT: Laura Reyman on  
“Civil War Widows and Orphans”
- July 17th, Lincoln-Davis CWRT: Leslie Goddard as  
“Mary Chesnut, Civil War Diarist”
- July 19th, Springfield/Macoupin County CWRT: Will Furry on  
“Illinois Historic Civil War Markers”
- July 26th, Springfield/Macoupin County CWRT: Bill Teshner and Larry Werline on  
“Grant and Sherman win the War”
- Aug. 2nd, Springfield/Macoupin County CWRT: Christian McWhirter on  
“Illinois Songwriters who helped win the Civil War”
- Aug. 9th, Springfield/Macoupin County CWRT: Reg Ankrum on  
“Stephen A. Douglas, Patriot”
- Aug. 14th, McHenry County CWRT: Panel Discussion
- Aug. 16th, Springfield/Macoupin County CWRT: Bill Lear on  
“Original Illinois Civil War Flags”
- Aug. 21st, Lincoln-Davis CWRT: Pamela Toller on “The Heroines of Mercy Street”
- Aug. 23rd, South Suburban CWRT: Bruce Allardice on “The Election of 1864”
- Aug. 23rd, Springfield/Macoupin County CWRT: Panel Discussion on  
“Lincoln as Commander in Chief”

## **LINCOLN DAY CEREMONY IN SPRINGFIELD**



On April 15th the SUV and other organizations held their annual remembrance of the death of Abraham Lincoln, at the Lincoln Tomb in Springfield, Illinois. Our past president Jerry Kowalski helped lead the commemoration.

## **CIVIL WAR SYMPOSIUM IN AUGUST**

The Civil War Education Association will hold its Second Annual Summer Symposium Aug. 16-18, at the Spring Mill Inn at Spring Mill State Historic Park, Mitchell, Indiana. They have assembled an impressive list of historians who will present talks on various intriguing aspects of Civil War history. Among the presenters are Kent Masterson Brown, Stephen Davis, Gary Ecelbarger, Dale Phillips, Brian Steel Wills, and our own Bruce Allardice and Leslie Goddard. For more information, call 800-298-1861.

## **GOODMAN THEATRE**

This Summer the Goodman Theatre is presenting *Father Comes Home From the Wars (Parts 1, 2 & 3)* (May 25 – June 24) written by Pulitzer Prize winner Suzan Lori-Parks and directed by Nigel Smith. The production follows Hero, a Texas slave, who faces a simple yet monumental choice: join the Confederate army in the Civil War to win his freedom—or remain enslaved at the plantation with the woman that he loves.