



THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



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807th REGULAR MEETING, Friday, January 14th, 2022

Rob Girardi on

"General John E. Smith, Galena's Forgotten General"

Live/Zoom Meeting. Time: Jan. 14, 2022, 07:30 PM CST

Zoom Option ID 891 9378 3554; Passcode: 338904



Galena Illinois boasts that it sent nine generals to the Civil War, the most famous of whom is Ulysses S. Grant. Many cannot name the other eight generals, but in addition to Ely S. Parker, Jasper Maltby and John Duer, there were two John Smith's. John Corson Smith fought in most of the major battles of the Army of the Cumberland, but this talk focuses on John Eugene Smith.

Our Smith operated a silver shop on Main Street in Galena near the Rawlins law office and the Grant Tannery. John E. Smith befriended U.S. Grant and was instrumental in restoring Grant to the army. He is the player behind the scenes in many well-known events of the war and is perhaps the most important unknown general of the war.

Robert I. Girardi has a master's degree in Public History from Loyola University of Chicago. He is a past president of the Civil War Round Table of Chicago, a fellow of the Company of Military Historians, and is on the Board of Directors of the Illinois State Historical Society. He is a popular speaker and consultant on all aspects of the American Civil War. He has written or edited many books on the American Civil War, including The Military Memoirs of General John Pope, Campaigning with Uncle Billy,

The Civil War Memoirs of Sgt. Lyman S. Widney, 34th Illinois Volunteer Infantry, and Gettysburg in Art and Artifacts.

Battlefield Preservation

Dear ____:

We're fast approaching the holidays, and I imagine you and your families are preparing for this wonderful season. But before this year ends, I must share with you an update about our Gaines' Mill- Cold Harbor Saved Forever Campaign.

If you'll recall, the Gaines' Mill-Cold Harbor Saved Forever Campaign is a 20-years in the making opportunity to save nearly 600 acres of supremely hallowed ground at the heart of both the Gaines' Mill and Cold Harbor battlefields in Virginia.

A couple of months ago, I announced "Phase Two" of this bold and audacious plan. **The good news is that we've raised about nearly half of the \$529,429 we need.** But we cannot complete payment on "Phase Two" of this monumental preservation effort until we meet the goal.

As I have shared with you in prior communication about this opportunity... This vital land is where two epic battles took place — the Battle of Gaines' Mill in 1862 and the Battle of Cold Harbor in 1864. We know you appreciate the importance of these battles and you can refer to historical details on our Gaines' Mill and Cold Harbor Campaign Overview.

Remember, this is the hallowed ground that has been described so critically...

"Nowhere else does a single piece of land offer so much relating to a pair of major battles."

– Historian Gary Gallagher

"Even if you have to sell every other piece of battlefield land the Trust has ever saved in order to preserve this land, you should do it. It's that important!"

– Historian and former Trust Board Member Ed Bearss

I hope we have made a good enough case to earn your support of this **historic effort** — an effort that has been years in the making. We hope you will agree that this battlefield land is like no other and deserves the full weight of your support to preserve it for future generations.

'Til the battle is won,

David N. Duncan
President
American Battlefield Trust

December Meeting

By Mark Matranga

Dennis Doyle addressed The Civil War Round Table at its 807th Regular Meeting on December 10, 2021, on “Illinois Regiments at Gettysburg.” Although a small contingent, the three Illinois regiments, the 8th and 12th Cavalry Regiments and the 82nd Infantry Regiment, served the Army of the Potomac well on those fateful days in early July 1863 when Union forces met Robert E. Lee and his Army of Northern Virginia in the greatest battle fought on United States soil. Lee marched his army north with an eye toward facing his opponent on ground of his choosing – the free soil of Pennsylvania. Up to the end of June, the Confederate invasion went well, Lee’s divisions spreading far and wide and approaching the capitol at Harrisburg.

On June 30 George Meade became the army’s commander. Also important for that date, John Buford’s cavalry division arrived in Gettysburg. Doyle maintained that Buford presented a formidable adversary for Lee: the best cavalry officer in the Union army, smart, tough, disciplined, he was respectful toward and loyal to his men. A Rock Island native, West Point Class of 1848, Buford had served on the Texas frontier and in Utah. Illustrative of his character, Buford responded to an offer of a commission from the Governor of Kentucky in 1861, “I was a captain in the United States Army and intend to remain one.” Interestingly, one of his comrades during the Indian wars was Henry Heth, with whom he would clash on July 1, 1863.

Having shadowed Lee’s movements, Buford instincts led him to conclude that the Confederates were converging on Gettysburg from the west and north. To that end, he deployed his brigades to meet this threat, with the 8th and 12th on the Chambersburg Pike northwest of town. In communicating with one of his brigade commanders on June 30, Buford, “We have good ground and can handle anything the enemy can send us. The devil’s to pay,” He advised that the enemy would attack in the morning in force and they would have to “fight like the devil” to hold on until support arrived. He concluded, “The enemy knows the importance of this ground.” Regimental commanders, Major John Beveridge (8th IL, the ‘Abolitionist Regiment’) and Col. George Chapman (12th IL), established videttes several miles out the Pike where they could observe the advancing enemy.

As the Rebel army approached, Lt. Marcellus Jones of the 8th Cavalry borrowed a carbine from Sgt. Levi Shafer and fired the first shot. The weapon lacked the range to

reach the enemy line but alerted his comrades that the battle had begun. Both regiments fought a two-hour fighting withdrawal/defense in depth which delayed the Confederate advance for over two hours and gained time for Gen. Reynolds to bring reinforcements to McPherson's Ridge. The 8th and 12th moved to Seminary Ridge; the 8th was deployed for a time in town. Later, when it appeared the First Corps was about to be flanked, Buford massed Gamble's brigade for an attack near the Fairfield Road; this was called off when Union troops retreated toward town.

Both regiments were posted on the Emmitsburg and Taneytown Roads later on July 1. On July 2 the regiments were stationed near the Peach Orchard when Corps Commander General Pleasonton ordered them to Westminster. After refitting they participated in the pursuit of Lee's retreating army and at the action at Falling Waters. Major Beveridge was promoted to Colonel in November 1863 and served as Governor of Illinois, 1873-77.

The 82nd Infantry Regiment, Major Edward Salomon, commanding, was assigned to General Schurz' Division, General Howard's XI Corps. The regiment was primarily ethnic Germans, with one Jewish company. Their experience on July 1 was less memorable than that of the cavalry, but it performed well in protecting Dilger's Battery on Oak Hill. However, the division was positioned too far from town with no support on its right and was overwhelmed by superior numbers. Retreating to Cemetery Hill, the 82nd was instrumental in repelling Ewell's July 2 night attack and assisted General Greene's defense of Johnson's attack on Culps' Hill. Further, the 82nd cleared the area adjacent to Cemetery Hill of Confederate sharpshooters. Doyle argues that the 82nd does not receive proper credit for its role in defending Cemetery Hill.

Doyle's account of Illinois' contribution to the battle of Gettysburg was most interesting, especially regarding the role of the 82nd regiment: most historians treat the German units as poor relations. Certainly, John Buford's performance throughout the campaign is legendary, and it could be said that the Illinois cavalry regiments were instrumental in winning the battle. Without their efforts, Henry Heth's men may well have marched into town on July 1, 1863.



BULLETIN BOARD

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

“Five Factors Impacting Prison Camps During the Civil War”

Friday, January 14, Noon, Presenter: David Keller

Mr. Keller’s program focuses on five factors including: 1) Lack of a strategic plan for prison development and management before and in the early stages of the war; 2) Inadequate plans for long-term incarceration of prisoners of war; 3) Poor selection, high turnover and lack of training of camp command; 4) Lack of training of camp guards; 5) Failure to provide individual soldiers information on how to behave as POWs.

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 Feb. 14th, starting at 3:30 CST, the **Abraham Lincoln Bookshop**’s “House Divided” series will feature an interview with author John Avlon, who will discuss his latest book, *Lincoln and the Fight for Peace*. Visit <https://alincolnbookshop.com/> for more.

On Jan. 26 **Rob Girardi** is speaking on “Civil War Engineers” at the St Louis CWRT.

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.

Jan. 5th, Kankakee Valley CWRT: Steve DePasquale on "The 1864 Camp Douglas Conspiracy" (Cancelled)

Jan. 7th, Northern Illinois CWRT: Bruce Allardice on "The Civil War and Baseball"

Jan. 8th, Two Old Goats in Cedar Lake: Scott Dominiak on "Lincoln's Spiritual Journey"

Jan. 13th, Milwaukee CWRT: Gary Adelman on "Civil War Myths and Mistakes"

Jan. 15th, Salt Creek CWRT: Brian Conroy on "Little Egypt's Civil War"

Jan. 18th, Lincoln-Davis CWRT: Dave Powell on "The Shenandoah Valley in the Civil War"

Jan. 27th, South Suburban CWRT: Jim Hessler on "General Sickles"

Future Chicago CWRT Meetings

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*