



THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



Volume LXXXII, Number 5

Chicago, Illinois

January 2023

815th REGULAR MEETING, Friday, January 13th, 2023

Robert Girardi on

"Union Prisoners of War at Camp Douglas"

**Live/Zoom Meeting. Time: Jan. 13th, 2023, 07:30 PM CST.
Zoom Option ID 845 3227 1496; No Passcode needed**

**NOTE: The January 2023 meeting will be held at
the Holiday Inn Oak Brook, 17W 350 22nd St.,
Oakbrook Terrace.**



Camp Douglas, located on the south side of Chicago, was Illinois' largest Civil War training camp. More than 40,000 volunteers mustered here. In February 1862, the camp was converted to accommodate Confederate Prisoners of war. About 24,000 Confederates were held there during the war, of which 6,000 died. Their story is well-told. Yet lesser known is the story of the thousands of Union POWs who were held in the camp while awaiting exchange.

After the surrender of Harpers Ferry in September 1862, the captured Union soldiers were interred in parole camps.

More than 8,000 of these were sent to Camp Douglas. These soldiers occupied barracks recently vacated by Confederate prisoners and were subjected to the same poor sanitary conditions and privations. Their uncertain future and lack of understanding

of their status led to a breakdown in discipline. This is an account of their troublesome experiences in Chicago.

Robert I. Girardi has a Masters Degree in Public History from Loyola University. He is a lifelong student of the American Civil War and has studied all aspects of the conflict. He is a past president of the Chicago CWRT and is the author or editor of nine books, and numerous articles and book reviews. He was a board member of the Illinois State Historical Society and was guest editor for the 2011-2014 Sesquicentennial of the Civil War issues of the *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*. His most recent article, "Reconsidering Major General Gouverneur K. Warren," appeared in the July 2020 issue of *North and South Magazine*. He is currently working on a military biography of Warren.

Battlefield Preservation

Three parcels of land [in SC and NY] totaling almost seven acres — with history spanning the French & Indian War, the Revolutionary War, and the beginning shots of the Civil War — must be preserved and we must act fast to save it.

Together, their transaction value is more than \$2.7 million, but we can secure this land for only \$62,000 — an astounding \$45-to-\$1 match. Each of these transactions will allow us to add to existing protected lands and preserve them for future generations, while making progress toward our ambitious goal of saving 2,500 acres of Revolutionary War battlefields to mark the conflict's 250th anniversary. ...

The property at **Fort Johnson** has relevance for its part in the Revolutionary War as well being the location where the first mortar shots were fired signaling the beginning of the Civil War. Near Charleston, South Carolina, the property overlooks Charleston Harbor and Fort Sumter. This location makes it a developer's dream.

These nearly two acres have a high purchase price, as prices around Charleston have doubled in the last ten years and increased a whopping 17% in the past year alone! With its view, it's only a matter of time before someone with no appreciation of its historic significance buys it and obscures its importance from the public forever.

David Duncan, President
American Battlefield Trust

December Meeting

By Mark Matranga

Gary Adelman regaled The Civil War Round Table with a fast-paced lecture and photographic essay, "Midwest Civil War Extravaganza," at its 814th Regular Meeting on December 9, 2022. Adelman's presentation featured a Midwest perspective on the origins and development of the war and the contribution the section made to the war effort. He used scores of images depicting different aspects of soldiering, in camp and in the field, reminding us of the various roles that soldiers played in the war.

Adelman emphasized that the war had its origins in the Middle West in the 1840s and 50s. The sectional conflict came to a head in the fight over the Kansas-Nebraska Act and the doctrine of popular sovereignty championed by Illinois's senator, Stephen Douglas. War on the border after 1854 eventually developed into what William Seward termed an 'irrepressible conflict' in which "the Midwest was going to play a big part," according to Adelman.

In rapid fire fashion, Adelman showed photographs of the Matthews, Brady and Gardner, as well as O'Sullivan and Russell, with details of training camps and encampments such as Fort Defiance, Ohio, and Camp Morton, Indiana, and prisons: Libby in Richmond, Camp Douglas in Chicago, Johnson's Island, Ohio, and Rock Island, Illinois. There were images of battlefields: Perryville, Champion Hill, The Railroad Redoubt and Shirley House entrenchments at Vicksburg, Chickamauga, Franklin, Bentonville, Fort McAllister, all fields on which western troops fought. And no photo essay would be complete without images of iconic gunboats such as DeKalb and Galena, and artillery units such as Battery H, 1st Illinois Artillery.

Adelman's choices were not limited to landscapes and buildings. There were multiple images of individual soldiers, both common enlisted men and prominent officers and generals. The young Ulysses Grant and Alex Hays, Sherman, Custer, Rutherford Hayes. Also shown were Isiah Richardson, Grenville Dodge and James as well as Arthur MacArthur, Lew Wallace and John Logan. Notably, there was one female image, Martha Brainerd, and one of Johnny Clem, the Drummer Boy of Shiloh. Adelman did give one example of a non-western unit, the 150th New York, which he used to show that troops other than the Iron Brigade wore the Hardee Hat.

Veterans' photographs are an essential part of Civil War photography; Adelman provided images of post war reunions. He also discussed women's role in the war, showing the Iowa Women's Relief Corps. Lincoln figures prominently in war photography as well, as seen in his funeral images. Last, Adelman noted that cemeteries and monuments were important subjects for photography. All major cities and even moderate sized cities in the Midwest raised monuments to the war, and as

time passed the states erected monuments on all major battlefields, Vicksburg, Shiloh, and Chickamauga being the best examples.

To describe a Gary Adelman lecture is virtually impossible, as he and his images are best seen. Thus, one should access the Library of Congress archives (www.loc.org) to view the many photographs, and to Marc Kunis (youtube) to view the talk. But one lasting Adelman insight is worth noting: despite photography being relatively primitive at the time, plates of the era produced high resolution prints which allow the modern viewer access to detail modern cameras cannot match. Adelman confirms for this writer a long-held truism – no Matthew Brady, no Civil War. He makes clear that the photographic record not only enhances our appreciation of the war but is fundamental to our understanding of it.



BULLETIN BOARD

Our in-person meetings are (usually) held at:

Holiday Inn O'Hare

5615 N. Cumberland, Chicago, IL 60631

Parking at the Holiday Inn is FREE

Dinner \$40.00 Members and Non- Members

Cocktails at 5:30, Dinner at 6:30

Presentation only is \$10 per person.

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

Friday, January 13th, noon. “The Last Depot” Presented by Mark Gormican

The Last Depot is a 90-minute dramatization concerning a Union Civil War veteran, L.J. Nelson, 21st Wisconsin, and his return to Andersonville Prison thirty-one years after the death of his messmate, Sgt. James Torbert of the 6th Wisconsin.

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

Bruce Allardice will speak on “Chicagoland Fights the Civil War” to students at McHenry County College Jan. 26th.

More Upcoming Local Civil War Events

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

Jan. 4th, Kankakee Valley CWRT: Dale Hill on "The Beginning of the War in Missouri"

Jan. 6th, Northern Illinois CWRT: David Powell on "The Tullahoma Campaign"

Jan. 12th, Milwaukee CWRT: Robert Girardi, "The Union Prisoners of War at Camp Douglas"

Jan. 17th, Lincoln-Davis CWRT: Ernest Dollar on "Hearts Town Asunder"

Jan. 21st, Salt Creek CWRT: Jonathan Sebastian on "The Valley Campaign of 1864"

Jan. 26th, South Suburban CWRT: Steward Dempsey on "11th Corps at Gettysburg"

Future Chicago CWRT Meetings

Feb. 10th: Charlie Knight on "Robert E. Lee"

Mar. 10th: Dwight Hughes on "Unlike Anything That Ever Floated"

Apr. 14th: Richard Holloway on "The Red River Campaign"

May 12th: Sean Michael Chick on "Grant's Left Hook: The Bermuda Hundred Campaign"

June 9th: Thomas Cartwright, 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/>

Ed Bearss Book award: Nominations Sought. This Chicago CWRT award is for a new book or body of work of recent vintage that breaks new ground in our study of the Civil War.

The committee is seeking nominations that meet these criteria from the general membership. The committee consists of Rob Girardi as chairman, Mark Matranga, and Kurt Carlson. Several books have been put forth but we are seeking additional nominees prior to making a determination.

CWRT Executive Committee Meeting

It will be held Jan. 28th, starting at 10 a.m., at Rob Girardi's House (aka Camp Girardi), 4532 North Forestview Road, Chicago. As always, all CWRT members are welcome to attend.

Red River 2023 Tour Update....

The tour will be a one bus tour on a bus with a capacity for 56. Early registration for the tour includes a \$200 deposit to reserve your seat on the bus and a free Tour T-Shirt. After we have reached 56-person capacity there will be a wait list for the tour.

The deadline for Early registration is Feb 1, 2023 after which total tour cost will need to be paid.

In February we will be providing those people who have registered for the tour a sheet listing meal choices for our Lunches/Dinners at our Base Hotel, Kentwood Plantation, Merci Beaucoup Restaurant, Cane River Commissary, and the Tabasco Restaurant as well as meal options for a catered BBQ Lunch at the Mansfield Battlefield.



To register for the tour see Curt Thomasco at upcoming meetings for a copy of the Tour Itinerary and Tour Registration Form along with your deposit. Also please note that the Tour Itinerary and Tour Registration Form can be downloaded from the Chicago CWRT website and checks in the amount of \$200 made payable to the Chicago CWRT can be mailed to Rae Radovich at the address listed on the Form.

A link to a Suggested Reading List/Bibliography is available on the website as well for those who wish to read up on the Campaign.