



THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



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September 2024

829th REGULAR MEETING, Friday, September 13th, 2024

John Horn on "The Wilson-Kautz Raid, June-July 1864"

**Live/Zoom Meeting. Time: Sept. 13th, 2024, 07:30 PM CST.
Zoom Option ID 845 3227 1496; No Passcode needed**



Grant wasted no time after his Petersburg assaults of June 15-18, 1864, failed to capture the city. He launched his second offensive against Petersburg hours later. Among other things, he sent his cavalry on a raid to cut the Confederate railroads south of Petersburg. This would slow any reinforcements sent from the south and west to the enemy at Petersburg and Richmond. Grant also hoped that in case his infantry failed in its mission a lack of provisions would force the foe to abandon those cities.

But at Petersburg Grant faced Lee and not Floyd as at Fort Donelson in 1862 or Pemberton as at Vicksburg in 1863. Lee, his cavalry commander Hampton, and Mahone smashed Grant's cavalry raiders at the battles of Sappington Church and First Reams Station.

Born and reared in Chicago, John Horn has practiced law there since 1976. He has written three books and co-edited another about Petersburg, Virginia's soldiers, and the siege of that city. His most recent book, The Petersburg Regiment in the Civil War: A History of the 12th Virginia Infantry from John Brown's Hanging to Appomattox, 1859-

1861 (Savas Beatie), won the 2019 Army Historical Foundation Distinguished Writing Award for Unit History. He has published articles in *Civil War Times Illustrated*, *America's Civil War*, *Gettysburg Magazine*, and *North and South Magazine*. He blogs at johnhorncivilwarauthor.blogspot.com.

Battlefield Preservation

Dear :

The summer of 1864 saw some of the most brutal and determined fighting of the Civil War, with now seasoned soldiers and generals resolute to bring the conflict to its end. As steadfast as the armies stood, so have we. I'm proud to say today, thanks to you, 160 years later, we can commemorate that summer of '64 with 53 acres preserved forever associated with two of its notable battles, Reams' Station and Second Deep Bottom. Thank you!

Heart of the Battle

I'm fond of saying that when it comes to preserving hallowed ground, sometimes good things come in small packages. That's true for three of these preserved acres that lie at the heart of the June 29, 1864, First Battle of Reams' Station and sit at the center of the battlefield, which saw action again at the Second Battle of Reams' Station on August 25.

These three acres are situated along the north side of what was then known as the Depot Road, today's Reams Drive. Federal cavalry under Gen. August V. Kautz used the Depot Road to approach Reams' Station on the morning of June 29, 1864. They immediately came under fire from Confederate artillery and infantry positioned near the railroad. The Federal cavalry dismounted and approached the railroad, capturing fifty soldiers from the 10th and 14th Alabama. Although impossible to specifically locate on the ground, this event occurred near or partially on these now preserved acres.

As more Federal cavalry arrived in the vicinity, their commander created a defensive line facing both north and east, encompassing this tract. Later in the day, the Confederates mounted a multi-pronged assault that broke the Federal line and sent the Union troopers fleeing in retreat, some, no doubt, traversing this land, again, in the process.

In short, this small parcel that lies in the very heart of the battlefield is supremely significant and vital to the story of the action on this important battlefield.

Second Deep Bottom

We've also preserved 50 vital acres in Henrico County, Va., significant tracts during the August 14-20, 1864, Second Battle of Deep Bottom, also known as Fussell's Mill. Fussell's Mill pond along Bailey's Creek developed, almost accidentally, into a key defensive position east of Richmond during the summer of 1864. A Union strike force landed at Deep Bottom on the James River overnight on August 13-14, imperiling Confederate defenses. On the 14th, in a stifling heat, 2nd Corps infantrymen belonging to Gen. Francis C. Barlow's division meandered through the woods to the vicinity of the millpond. Colonel George N. Macy's Union brigade made a direct charge across ground at the southern tip of the millpond but suffered a stinging defeat. Macy fell badly wounded. Sergeant Alonzo Pickle of the 1st Minnesota was awarded a Medal of Honor for risking his life here to assist his wounded officer.

Two days later, on August 16, despite improved Confederate fortifications and reinforcements, a frontal attack led by the men of Gen. Alfred H. Terry's 10th Corps division broke through the Confederate lines. Men of Gen. William Birney's division joined in, as did a few from the 2nd Corps division. Gen. Victor J.B. Girardey's Georgia brigade dissolved and for a time the Federals had possession of the Darbytown Road and stood on the direct route to Richmond. Confederate counterattacks involving men from at least six different brigades blunted the breakthrough and pushed the Union troops back, entirely restoring the lost line. Hand-to-hand fighting in some places and heavy musketry at all spots produced a final casualty list of nearly 3,000 names. These 50 acres preserve varied features associated with the battles of the 14th and 16th, including the ground that hosted nearly all of Macy's attack on the 14th.

Folks, I said the Summer of '64 was brutal and determined. Our steadfastness and that of our members, donors and partners, including funding from ABPP, VBPF and VLCF, has saved these acres and this important history for future generations forever. What a victory!

We can't thank you enough for helping us commemorate these 160th anniversaries with such important preservation successes.

'Til the battle is won,
David Duncan, President, American Battlefield Trust

June Presentation

By Mark Matranga

Tim Smith regaled The Civil War Round Table at its 828th Regular Meeting on June 14, 2024, with his engaging Nevins-Freeman Address on “Grierson’s Raid.” Well known for his works on the Tennessee River campaign, Champion Hill and his five-volume study of the Vicksburg Campaign, Smith has carved out a well-deserved place in Civil War historiography of the Western Theater. His “The Real horse Soldiers,” is perhaps the definitive account of this most consequential cavalry raid of the war.

In late 1862 and early 1863 General U.S. Grant tried numerous schemes to outflank Vicksburg and capture that strategic city, none of which succeeded. Eventually, his army marched down the west bank and crossed the Mississippi below (south of) the town on April 30, 1863.

Integral to this latter plan was the raid conducted by Colonel Benjamin Grierson, a man who had no affinity for horses and who before the war taught music. Grierson’s task was to take a brigade of cavalry with the objective of destroying the railroad and the telegraph connection to Jackson and Vicksburg. While undertaking the raid, Grierson would divert enemy forces which otherwise could have come to the aid of General Pemberton who commanded the garrison at Vicksburg.

Under orders of General Hurlbut, Grierson assembled a force of approximately 1,650 veteran horse soldiers in three regiments: the 6th and 7th Illinois Cavalry, commanded by Colonel Edward Prince and Lt. Col. Reuben Loomis, respectively, and the 2nd Iowa Cavalry, commanded by Lt. Col. Edward Hatch. The brigade included Co. A, 2nd Illinois Artillery. This force was one of several sent out from western Tennessee: cavalry forces under Grenville Dodge and Abel Streight were sent east toward Alabama; additional infantry and cavalry moved out of Memphis into northwestern Mississippi, all designed to attract the attention of Confederate Generals James Chalmers and Daniel Ruggles.

With the rebels focusing northeast and northwest, Grierson’s troopers rode south out of LaGrange on April 17, 1863. They eluded multiple Confederate cavalry units and reached the Tallahatchie River and Pontotoc where they confronted a Mr. Sloan, the “irate plantation owner” as Smith described him. When his men began to take ill, Grierson sent them and parts of the 2nd Iowa and the battery back to LaGrange on April 19. This ruse worked: the rebel commander Lt. Col. Barteau thought the Yankees were retreating and pursued north. When arriving at Kilgore Plantation on April 20, Grierson stayed on course, sending the rest of the 2nd Iowa east to break up the railroad, further confusing the Confederates.

Grierson proceeded to Starkville, sending out detachments to gain time and confuse the enemy. Once over the Pearl River he ordered forced marches; his troopers reached the Southern Railroad at Newton Station on April 24 when they destroyed the railroad and station, several bridges, locomotives and cars as well as cutting the telegraph link west to Jackson. The troopers' work had now alerted the enemy, compelling further forced marches to stay ahead of their pursuers. The 950 who made the entire trip eventually rode into Port Hudson, Louisiana, exhausted, on May 2, 1863, having not merely ridden around an army but some 600 miles in 16 days across an entire state.

The raid was a huge success for Grierson as a cavalry commander and Grant as a strategic thinker. Grant was not merely sitting at Milliken's Bend hatching hairbrained schemes to subdue Vicksburg. He was moving pieces on a wider chessboard, skillfully manipulating and deceiving almost all Confederate forces in Mississippi outside of Vicksburg and Port Hudson, men who could have better contributed to the defense of their state than chasing Grierson's shadow. Perhaps more important, the raid took Pemberton's eyes off Grant, a fatal mistake as it permitted the Union general to steal a march on him.

Smith has undoubtedly earned his reputation as a great historian, but The Round Table will remember Tim as a great storyteller. The best part of his presentation was the stories of the people he met as he traced the route of the raid and mapped out the locations the brigade bivouacked and skirmished. Many of the towns and other sites no longer exist, so having his experiences with those locals added color and humor to the story. A memorable evening for all.



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 \$40.00 Members and Non- Members

Cocktails at 5:30, Dinner at 6:30

Presentation only is \$10 per person.

September 13th, noon at the **Kenosha Civil War Museum**, Gordon Dammann will speak on "The Letterman Medical Evacuation Plan at Antietam."

The **17th Annual Great Lakes Civil War Forum** will be held at the Civil War Museum in Kenosha, Wisconsin on Saturday, September 14. They have a great lineup of

authors and historians who will speak on topics related to the Union Navy during the Civil War:

The Battle of Mobile Bay, by John Quarstein, Director Emeritus of the USS Monitor Center

Mr. Lincoln's Brown Water Navy, by Dr. Gary Joiner, Director and Chair of the History Department, LSU Shreveport

Hero of the Red River: The Life and Times of Joseph Bailey, by Mr. Michael Goc, Acclaimed Wisconsin History Author

The Navy and Left-Armed Corps: Outstanding Service in War and Peace, by Stephen A. Goldman, M.D., Author of *One More War to Fight*

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

On October 20th, Garfield Farms Museum in Campton Hills, Illinois is holding a symposium on the Battle of Gettysburg, with Gary Adelman as featured speaker. For more information, visit garfieldfarm.org

September 14-15 at Columbia Woods Forest Preserve in Willow Springs: "A River Thru History – The Des Plaines Valley Rendezvous," a living history event featuring the voyageurs of early Illinois.

Bruce Allardice is speaking Sept. 17th to the SUV Custer Camp, in Glenview, on "Loose Lips:" Military Secrecy in the Civil War

More Upcoming Local Civil War Events

Sept. 6th, Northern Illinois CWRT: **Leslie Goddard** as "Clara Barton"

Sept. 8th, Northern Indiana CWRT: Bill Taylor on "American Civil War vs. Vietnam Civil War"

Sept. 9th, Rock Valley CWRT: Dwight Hughes on "The Battle of Hampton Roads"

Sept. 10th, McHenry County CWRT: **Rob Girardi** on "Rank Discord"

Sept. 10th, Southwest Michigan CWRT: Curt Fields as "President Grant"

Sept. 12th, Milwaukee CWRT: **John Horn** on "The Wilson-Kautz Raid, June-July 1864"

Sept. 14th, Salt Creek CWRT: **Rob Girardi** on "Stonewall Jackson"

Sept. 14th, Great Lakes Civil War Forum at Kenosha Museum

Sept. 17th, Lincoln-Davis CWRT: John Hopkins on "The Gettysburg Reunion of 1913"
Sept. 21st, DuPage Civil War and Memorabilia Show
Sept. 23rd, Crown Point Library: Bob Grenier on "Florida Civil War Veterans and the Fight to Preserve Their Legacy"
Sept. 26th, South Suburban CWRT: **John Horn** on "Grant Lays Siege to Lee: Petersburg"

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

Future Chicago CWRT Meetings

Oct. 11th: Larry Hewitt on "The Birth of Combat Photography"
Nov. 8th: Kent Masterson Brown on "General Meade at Gettysburg and Lee's Retreat"
Dec. 13th: Jon Sebastian on "We Are All in This War--the Northern Home Front"
Jan. 10th, 2025: Bjorn Skaptason on "Shiloh"
Feb. 14th: Hampton Newsome on "Gettysburg's Southern Front"
Mar. 14th: Gerry Prokopowicz on TBA
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"

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 September 19th at 3:30 CST their "House Divided" series will feature George Rable speaking on his new book, *Conflict of Command: George McClellan, Abraham Lincoln, and the Politics of War*

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

The CWRT Executive Committee Meeting, in August, passed a series of changes to how our CWRT operates:

- 1) We will move from a \$40 fee for dinner at our monthly meetings to a \$50 fee starting with the January 2025 meeting. As our meeting expenses have increased, so must our fees.
- 2) Beginning on July 01, 2025, we will no longer provide our monthly newsletter in

print and "snail mailed" to our members. Email only. Members desiring a print version can simply download the newsletter and print it out on their own at home.

- 3) **Bylaw Change**: Beginning on July 01, 2025, each Executive Board position will now have a two-year elected term.
- 4) **Bylaw Change**: Beginning on July 01, 2025, we will have five Trustee positions and eliminate three of them. Each Trustee position will have a two-year term, and all five will be elected at the same time--thus ending the staggering of two-year terms

The Bylaw changes are to be voted on by CWRT members at the November meeting.

