

The Outpost

The Newsletter of the Salt Creek Civil War Round Table
Vol. LVIX No. 8 April 2021



539th Regular Meeting

DATE: Friday, April 16, 2021
PLACE: Confines of your own home.
Due to Covid restrictions the meeting will be via zoom
TIME: 7:30 p.m.
TOPIC: “Benjamin Franklin Butler: Lincoln’s Most Trusted General”
SPEAKER: Stephen Alban

Benjamin Butler, somewhat forgotten in history, was instrumental in the political battle for hearts and minds in the Civil War. In early 1863 Lincoln asked Butler to give a speech in New York City (a Democratic Stronghold). He needed Butler to instill hope in the people there. Mr. Alban has an original copy of that speech and will be sharing key portions of that speech where Butler lays out 1). How the rebellion had grown from a riot into a revolution, 2). The contest has come to be between the United States and her enemies and 3). Freedom of the slave/constitutional under the laws of war.

He was first to declare slaves “contraband” of war, and caused great controversy when he issued his famous “Woman’s Order” in New Orleans. He was investigated by Congress during the war and was house manager prosecuting Andrew Johnson after the war. Much controversy surrounded Butler. He took advantage of his relationship with the President. The two men were quite close with Butler meeting with Lincoln as recently as April 11th of 1865, four days before Lincoln died.

Steven Alban is a graduate of Northern Illinois University. With degrees in Political Science and History, Mr. Alban brings a unique perspective of this time period. As an aspiring author, Mr. Alban has spent years researching people and events of the period. Traveling extensively, Mr. Alban has held many discussions with Lincoln scholars to explore various nuances of the time. Theories have been exchanged. Stories have been told. Battlegrounds have been visited. The fruits of that research will be presented for you to digest and determine just how frustrating a time Mr. Lincoln steered us through.

Join Zoom Meeting
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84125020370>
Meeting ID: 841 2502 0370
Passcode: 659042

MARCH MEETING UPDATE BY ART FOLEY

Gene Salecker presented "Friends, Family, Fraud and Corruption: Rueben Benton Hatch", for our March Zoom fest!

As described, Rueben Benton Hatch was the opposite of those patriots who gave all for the Union. He tried to take it all! Originally from New Hampshire, Hatch moved to the western Illinois area in the 1840's. The family established a general store which prospered. With business success came business expansion. Hatch and his siblings began to move in higher social levels and made a number of strong connections. One of those associations Hatch made was procuring the legal services of Abraham Lincoln. They would develop a friendship over time.

When the war broke, Hatch volunteered, serving briefly as a Lieutenant with the 8th Illinois Infantry. Finding the life in a regiment not quite to his tastes, Hatch mined his political connections and procured the position of Assistant Quartermaster at the base at Cairo, Illinois. From this post he launched upon a campaign to fleece the army and its suppliers of as much capital as possible through numerous grifting. His shameless activities aroused the suspicion of command authorities such as General Grant and others. Hatch manipulated his connections and past friendships with Illinois politicians and the President to evade his distractors. Arrested, investigated, complained of and abhorred, Hatch benefitted from astute conniving and pure luck to elude his detractors. Exonerated by an investigating committee and reinstated to his position by Lincoln, Rueben leaves the army in 1863, and returns home without waiting to see if his resignation is accepted. Back in Illinois, he is experiencing the loss of several children and the destruction of his store. Hatch consoles himself with alcohol. In need of funds he managed, (again utilizing his clout) another Quartermaster position and his larcenous ways continued.

As his dependence on the bottle increased, his resolve to stay in the army fluctuated. Ordered to take the mandatory exams in basic accounting in January 1865, he fails the test and is deemed totally unfit to discharge his duties. And yet he wriggled into obtaining a quartermaster position in Vicksburg. At this post, he developed a kick-back scheme defrauding the government on transit fees for released Union POWs. Thus the stage is set for the tragedy of the Sultana.

Afterwards, Hatch, honorably discharged, is investigated for his role. Incredibly he avoids prosecution and denies any feelings of remorse over the heavy loss of life.

Post-war saw Hatch trying different scams all of which came to naught. With his mounting dependence on the bottle and no solution to his financial woes, Hatch accepts from his father-in-law an opportunity to perform a construction project in 1871. Resorting to his nefarious ways, Hatch cuts corners to the effect that the building construction collapses. Rock bottom, plagued with increasing physical issues, Rueben succumbs on July 24, 1871.

We thank Mr. Salecker for his intriguing presentation and power point. Remember - "Crime Does Not Pay!" Huzzah !

VACANT CHAIR

Longtime member and friend Don Sikorski passed away unexpectedly March 17, 2021.

Don joined the Salt Creek Civil War Round Table in 1965, three years after its beginning. He was president from 1967-1969. From 1969 -1981 he was Corresponding Secretary and Newsletter Editor and continued to serve as Secretary until 1991. Don served as tour guide for many of the annual Fall Trips. Throughout the years Don gave at least 10 presentations and participated in numerous debates and panel discussions, many on his favorite subject Robert E. Lee. For his years of service and participation, Don was awarded the Marilyn Steele Lifetime Achievement Award in 2005. Don and his wife Darlene went on many Chicago Civil War Battlefield Tours, attended many Salt Creek Civil War events and enjoyed the 97th Regimental Band Concerts. (Always standing while Dixie was played)

Condolences can be sent to Darlene at 41 W. 55th Place, Westmont, IL 60559

APRIL 2021 PRESERVATION REPORT
BY BRIAN CONROY

Spring is in the air, and after the last year we have had, many of us will take this upcoming warmer weather to travel and explore different battlefields and historic sites (safely, of course). This month's preservation report is Part 1 of a focus on the rise of the modern preservation movement based on an article about Battlefield Preservation by Bob Zeller, who is co-founder and President for the Center for Civil War Photography.

In 1933, when the National Park Service took over ownership and management of the parks from the War Department, there were 11 national military parks, 10 battlefield sites and assorted monuments, memorials and cemeteries that had grown since veterans began erecting monuments in the 1890s. Interest in Civil War history began growing, and the first Civil War Round Table was established in Chicago in 1940, spawning a movement that led to the creation of hundreds Round Tables, which provided wellsprings of members and support for more than 100 such groups to help preserve individual battlefields.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the spread of suburban development began to threaten and consume battlefields around cities in the mid-Atlantic region rich with Civil War history, such as Washington, D.C., Richmond, Fredericksburg and Petersburg, Va., Atlanta, Ga., and other locations. The battlefield around Salem Church at Chancellorsville was largely developed by the 1990s, and at Manassas, the national battlefield park itself was threatened in 1957 by a plan to build Interstate 66 right through the heart of the battlefield on the existing Lee Highway, and a proposal for a theme park next to the battlefield was also defeated in 1973.

The final straw that brought about the modern, organized Civil War battlefield preservation movement happened after the Chantilly battlefield outside Washington, which had been celebrated throughout the Civil War centennial was being thrown away by the mid-1980s for development of condos, apartments, and commercial buildings. This desecration, and threats to other battlefields, brought together a group of concerned historians and Civil War buffs in July 1987 in Fredericksburg to create the first organization designed to save Civil War battlefield land by buying it.

The Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites (APCWS) acquired its first property in 1988 – a donation of 8.55 acres known as The Coaling, a Shenandoah Valley battle site at Port Republic, Virginia. The next two saves were donations as well, and a membership drive was launched as a \$50,000 campaign after receiving a pledge from New York financier Richard Gilder. As cash flowed, the APCWS began making new purchases every year, and by 1990, the APCWS had saved more than 660 acres at eight different battlefields.

UPCOMING CIVIL WAR EVENTS

Check with the organization sponsoring the program for meeting status

April 20, 2021

Lincoln/Davis CWRT will feature David Dixon presenting “General August Willich”
Country House Restaurant, Alsip, IL

April 22, 2021

South Suburban CWRT will feature Doug Dammann presenting “The Kenosha Civil War Museum”
South Suburban CWRT on Facebook (ZOOM MEETING)

April 24, 2021

Civil War Collector’s Show CANCELLED. Fairgrounds are being used for Covid Vaccination Site.
Next Show scheduled for September 25, 2021

May 1, 2021

Two Old Goats in Cedar Lake will feature Phil Angelo presenting “John Hunt Morgan”

May 7, 2021

Northern Illinois CWRT will feature Eric Wittenburg Topic to be determined
www.northernilcwr.org (ZOOM MEETING)

May 14, 2021

Chicago CWRT will feature Michael Hardy presenting “General Lee’s Immortals”
www.chicagocwr.org (ZOOM MEETING)

May 18, 2021

Lincoln/Davis CWRT will feature Jack Melton presenting “100 Pictures of Civil War Charleston”
Country House Restaurant, Alsip.

The Civil War Round Table Congress is sponsoring a series of virtual Civil War Lectures.
To view the schedule visit: <http://www.cwrtcongress.org/lectures.html>

The Kenosha Civil War Museum is also sponsoring virtual programs.
To view the schedule visit: <https://museum.kenosha.org/civilwar/events>

The Civil War Museum of Kenosha, WI, will be hosting its annual Great Lakes Civil War Forum on Saturday, September 11. As was the case last year, the museum will be offering both in-person and virtual options to attend the event. The information on the four programs and links to sign up for both options are below.

Saturday, September 11 | 9am – 4pm

In-Person Option: \$55 (\$70 non-member price) includes live in-person presenters, coffee breaks and boxed lunch

Limited to 30 participants

<https://84428.blackbaudhosting.com/84428/Great-Lakes-Civil-War-Forum-11Sep2021>

ALL FOR THE UNION

April 17, 2021 Rob Girardi will present: "Abraham Lincoln & the Common Soldier" at the Old Glory SUV in Springfield.

April 17, 2021 Bruce Allardice will present: "Baseball & the Civil War" at the Vintage Baseball Association Convention via ZOOM.

Don Sender has several boxes of Atlas Editions American Civil War Cards. The cards would be great for a young Civil War enthusiast. For more information Call Don at 630-668-1897.

FUTURE SALT CREEK CWRT MEETINGS

Check us out on Facebook and at saltcreekcwr.org

May 21, 2021

Dan Van Haften will present "The Tyranny of Public Discourse: Abraham Lincoln's Six Elements of Meaningful and Persuasive Writing" (ZOOM PRESENTATION)

June 18, 2021

Kevin Wood will present "Lincoln on Slavery, Emancipation, and Race Relations" (ZOOM PRESENTATION)

BACK IN HISTORY

50 Years Ago: Don Nixon presented "The Battle of Pilot Knob, Missouri"

25 Years Ago: Jim Soens presented "Island No. 10 & the New Madrid Campaign"

10 Years Ago: Bruce Allardice presented "Conscription in the Civil War"

THE SALT CREEK CWRT

President: Cindy Heckler

Vice-President: Rick Zarr

Secretary-Treasurer: Jan Rasmussen

Board Members: Mike Miller, Sharon Maher, Brian Conroy, Nancy Fritz, Rob Girardi

Historian: Cindy Intravartolo

Newsletter Staff: Jennie Warner, Art Foley, Brian Conroy & Jan Rasmussen

Facebook and Website Editor: Brian Conroy