

The Outpost

The Newsletter of the Salt Creek Civil War Round Table
Vol. LVIII No. 6 February 2020



530th Regular Meeting

DATE: Friday, February 21, 2020
PLACE: Oak Trace, 200 Village Drive, Downers Grove, IL
TIME: 8:00 p.m.
TOPIC: “Disaster on the Mississippi: The Sultana Explosion, April 27, 1865”
SPEAKER: Gene Salecker

Near the end of the April 1865, at the close of the Civil War, the Steamboat Sultana was carrying nearly 2000 recently released prisoners-of-war to the North from the terrible Confederate pens at Andersonville, GA and Cahaba, AL. At 2:00 am on the morning of April 27th when the Sultana was seven miles north of Memphis, her boilers suddenly exploded. The lives of every single individual aboard were suddenly in jeopardy. Author Gene Salecker will present the fascinating, but often overlooked story of the Sultana disaster, the deadliest maritime disaster in American history.

Gene Salecker, a well-known collector of Sultana artifacts and photographs, has been compiling data on the disaster since 1978, and has written numerous articles on the subject for Civil War magazines. For many years a member of a Civil War reenactment group, he maintains a comprehensive database of Union prisoners. Mr. Salecker is a native of Chicago and graduate of Northeastern Illinois University.

There is a new driveway in the front of the building that leads to a parking lot. If you need assistance parking, ask at the front desk or call the OnSite Transportation & Security at (630-401-6699) There are plenty of parking spaces available.

2020 Memberships renewals are due.

FEBRUARY 2020 PRESERVATION REPORT BY BRIAN CONROY

For this month's preservation report, I've decided to intertwine the themes of romance and battlefield preservation. The following stories tell not only of the preservation successes that have been achieved, but a true love story that is associated with it.

Gettysburg: Patrick "Paddy" O'Rourke was born in Ireland and married his wife, Clara Bishop, on July 9, 1862. The following year he was Colonel of the 140th New York and were on their way to reinforce the 3rd Corps at Gettysburg when ordered by Gen. Gouverneur K. Warren to defend Little Round Top. O'Rourke led his men in a charge and was struck through the neck. One week later, on July 9th, his widow arrived to claim his body on the one year anniversary of their wedding. Today's preservation efforts at Gettysburg consist of an adjacent tract of land around Stevens' Knoll.

Kelly's Ford: During the winter of the battle of Fredericksburg, Major John Pelham befriended Bessie Shackelford and spent as much time with her as possible. During the battle of Kelly's Ford the following March, Pelham was riding through a cavalry charge when a Union shell exploded above him and knocked him from his horse, with shards piercing his skull. He was transported back to the Shackelford house, where Bessie cleaned and dressed his wounds until he died that night. Presently, a tract of land southwest of Pelham's wounding site and along the Union lines is targeted for preservation.

Fort Donelson: General David Grier served with the 77th Illinois, and married Anna McKinney in 1863. They wrote love letters to each other constantly, as they were separated for several years as the war continued. He was posted in Paducah, KY, and then up and down the river until the battle of Fort Donelson, where he wrote to her, *"One thing I do know, while we were in the hottest of the fight my mind would wander to Peoria and to you, and I know if it is my fate to be killed in any of these actions my last thoughts shall be of you, and the last word spoken shall be your name."* Fort Donelson has been preserved by both the American Battlefield Trust and the Fort Donelson National Battlefield Park, some of which consist of rifle pits and earthworks.

First Bull Run: Perhaps the most famous love letter from the Civil War comes from Major Sullivan Ballou of the 2nd Rhode Island. A week before he was killed at the First Battle of Bull Run, Sullivan wrote home to his wife in Smithfield, Rhode Island, and told her, *"But, O Sarah! If the dead can come back to this earth and flit unseen around those they loved, I shall always be near you; in the gladdest days and in the darkest nights...always, always, and if there be a soft breeze upon your cheek, it shall be my breath, as the cool air fans your throbbing temple it shall be my spirit passing by. Sarah do not mourn me dead; think I am gone and wait for thee, for we shall meet again."* Battlefield land is preserved by the Civil War Trust and Manassas National Battlefield Park.

UPCOMING CIVIL WAR EVENTS

FEBRUARY 27, 2020

SOUTH SUBURBAN CWRT

"The 11th Corps at Chancellorsville"

Speaker: Dr. James Pula
Smokey Barque, 20 Kansas St.
Frankfort, IL
www.southsuburbancwrt.com

MARCH 2, 2020

2 OLD GOATS in Cedar Lake, IN

"General Thomas"

Speaker: Jerry Kowalski
219-390-7183

MARCH 6, 2020

NORTHERN ILLINOIS CWRT

"Mysteries of the CSS Hunley"

Speaker: Bruce Allardice
Arlington Hts. Memorial Library
northernilcwrt.org

MARCH 10, 2020

McHENRY COUNTY CWRT

"Old Abe & Friends: Civil War Mascots"

Speaker: Jan Rasmussen
Woodstock Public Library
www.mchenrycivilwar.com

MARCH 13, 2020

CHICAGO CWRT

"VMI's Civil War Legacy"

Speaker: David Sutherland
Holiday Inn O'Hare
5615 N. Cumberland, Chicago
dinnerreservation@chicagocwrt.org

MARCH 17, 2020

LINCOLN/DAVIS CWRT

"Civil War Generals"

Speaker: Rob Girardi
Country House Restaurant, Alsip, IL
lincolndavisroundtable@yahoo.com

ALL FOR THE UNION

The SCCWRT website is back.

Brian Conroy has taken over the SCCWRT Facebook Page.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS:

Steve Alban
Peter Fennell

BACK IN HISTORY

50 Years Ago: Don Sikorski presented:
"Side Talk on the Battles of Shiloh and Northern Mississippi "

25 Years Ago: Don Sender moderated the panel discussion "Resolved-The CW Was Fought Over Slavery" featuring Bill Hupp, Kim Foster and John Lapinski

10 Years Ago: Jim Cunningham presented:
"Nation vs State: Origins of the Conflict"
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FUTURE SCCWRT MEETINGS

March 20, 2020

"The Tyranny of Public Discourse: Abraham Lincoln's Six-Element Antidote for Meaningful and Persuasive Writing"
Speaker: Dan VanHaften

April 17, 2020

"The Battle of Honey Springs"
Speaker: Art Foley

THE SALT CREEK CWRT

www.saltcreekcwrt.org

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