

The Outpost

The Newsletter of the Salt Creek Civil War Round Table
Vol. LVIII No. 5 January 2020



529th Regular Meeting

DATE: Friday, January 17, 2020
PLACE: Oak Trace, 200 Village Drive, Downers Grove, IL
TIME: 8:00 p.m.
TOPIC: "The Battle of Honey Springs: Reconquest of the Frontier"
SPEAKER: Art Foley

July of 1863 was the month that turned the tide for the Union's war effort. With the victory at Gettysburg, the fall of Vicksburg, and the brilliant success of Rosecrans's Tullahoma Campaign, the paths were laid towards eventual victory. Of lesser fame, but perhaps of an approaching level of importance, was the victory achieved in the far off Indian Territory. After a four hour engagement of which the majority of the participants were either native Native American, Black, and Hispanic, the Union base of Fort Gibson was secured and the paths towards the fall of Fort Smith begun. Furthermore this engagement signaled the end of any large unit of confrontation in this theater for the remainder of the war as well as a reduction of supplies for the Confederacy.

Art Foley has been a longtime member and past president of the Salt Creek CWRT. He has given numerous talks on Civil War music, battles in the Trans-Mississippi Theater and various Union and Confederate generals. A retired music educator and musician, Art spends his time freelancing in various music groups, traveling with his wife Karen and raising tomatoes that Rob Girardi can only dream about.

2020 MEMBERSHIPS RENEWALS ARE DUE. Memberships received on or before the January meeting will be eligible for the free membership drawing.

DECEMBER MEETING UPDATE by Art Foley

With the dawning of another trip around the sun, I believe several important items should be reviewed:

1. We now know why there were no post-war reunions of the Confederate Submarine Corps.
2. Bruce Allardice can be depended on to deliver a marvelous presentation.
3. Mr. Allardice can bring home the goods even when wearing one of the quite possibly most hideous holiday sweaters ever seen on the North American continent.

Mr. Allardice shared a vivid presentation on the CSS Hunley with materials collected from a trip to the Charleston museum housing the vessel, US Navy test materials and movie clips. The Civil War was not the first instance of imagining submerged vehicles of war. David Bushnell's "Turtle" from the time of the revolution and Robert Fulton's "Nautilus" preceded and gave direction to the design of the southern ship. Spurred by financing from Horace Hunley and fabricated in Mobile Bay by James McClintock, the prototype developed at Mobile Bay gave decidedly mixed results. A need to implement the proposed sub in an oceanic trial made a move to Charleston, South Carolina necessary. With the assistance from Baxter Watson, Hunley and McClintock produced three vessels. They were the "Pioneer", then a battery powered vessel, vastly underpowered and finally the Hunley. Propulsion issues called for the implementation of a hand cranking system. Other ideas involving a two-element system, using a gas engine for surface movement and battery power for submerged motion were considered. Unfortunately, battery technology was in its infancy and not a practical resource. Another issue concerned the delivery system for explosives. A spar and firing cord system was the ultimate design.

Test trials were, to say the least, tragic. The first test, a pier side incident ended in drowning all of the crew except John Payne. Payne survived only due to being in the conning tower when the water flooded the sub. The next trial saw the vessel dive and never resurface. This time Mr. Hunley was at the controls. Raised after one month, conjecture after inspection pointed to pilot error, (Hunley himself).

Finally, Lt. George Dixon and his crew entered the cramped claustrophobic interior and moved off towards Federal ships. Approaching the USS Housatonic, the vessel submerged and delivered its weapon. Shortly after the explosion, the Union ship sank with the loss of five crewmen. The Hunley vanished beneath the waves. The submarine program after losing Dixon and his eight-man crew and previously thirty three mariners was discontinued.

Time passed. In the late 1970's the popular novelist Clive Cussler financed the first of ultimately three expeditions to find and if possible, to raise the CSS Hunley. In 1991 they found the conning tower in the area seaward from the site previously thought to be the site of the wreck at a depth of thirty feet. Able to raise the sub, it was transferred to a facility where it could be stabilized, cleaned and have the interior excavated. With the respect and reverence for the grave, the interior was emptied. The bones of the crew were removed, Dixon's position noted by the find of his "lucky" gold coin. All the bodies were found at their stations. The forensic exams provided material that enabled facial reconstructions and other post-mortem descriptions. The remains were buried with military honors in a public ceremony at Magnolia Cemetery in Charleston, SC.

The engineering of the vessel was found to be exceptional and provided answers that disproved many theories. Yet, theories as to the crew's actions after submerging still eludes experts. Consensus is that the men ran out of oxygen and fell into unconsciousness. Bruce provided information as to the tests that could be found on the U.S. Navy site and talked about the text available: Brian Hicks's "Sea of Darkness".

Thank you Bruce for providing a wonderful finale to 2019! Huzzah!

JANUARY 2020 PRESERVATION REPORT BY BRIAN CONROY

Greetings everyone, and welcome to 2020! Compared to 2019, battlefield preservation should be another banner year. Recognized nationally as one of America's most intact Civil War battlefields, Prairie Grove Battlefield State Park conserves the site where on December 7, 1862, the Confederate Army of the Trans-Mississippi clashed with the Union Army of the Frontier in a fierce fight that marked the last major Civil War engagement in northwest Arkansas. When the day was done, 2,700 soldiers had died.

Their victory in that battle enabled Union troops to retain control of northwest Arkansas and southwest Missouri.

From day one, The Conservation Fund has worked to protect the places where American history was made. At Prairie Grove, they have been using their Battlefield Revolving Fund established with grants from the Gilder Foundation to purchase historic land overlooking the battlefield from the site of the Confederate line. The parcel is then held until the state of Arkansas has the funding to purchase it and add it to the Prairie Grove Battlefield State Park.

Hoping to destroy Brig. Gen. Francis Herron's and Brig. Gen. James Blunt's divisions before they joined forces, Confederate Maj. Gen. Thomas C. Hindman placed his large force between the two Union divisions, turning on Herron first and routing his cavalry. As Hindman pursued the cavalry, he met Herron's infantry which pushed him back. The Rebels then established their line of battle on a wooded high ridge northeast of Prairie Grove Church. After the failure of two Federal assaults, a spirited artillery duel kept the opposing forces from gaining any advantage. Hearing the cannon fire from Herron's fight, Blunt moved his division toward the sound of the fighting and assailed the Confederate left flank. Hindman parried Blunt's advance but was unable to make any further progress against Herron. Though the battle ended as a stalemate, nightfall saw Hindman's force retreating to Van Buren establishing Federal control of northwest Arkansas.

A donation of \$100,000 was bequeathed in 1965 from the estate of Biscoe Hindman, son of Major General Thomas C. Hindman, who commanded Confederate troops at Prairie Grove. Architect Kenneth Cockram designed Hindman Hall and used the gift for the construction budget. The Prairie Grove Battlefield Park Commission dedicated the structure in 1965, which houses the park's museum. The park was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on September 4, 1970.

Prairie Grove is known as one of America's most intact Civil War battlefields. With more than 900 acres, this park commemorates the site of the Battle of Prairie Grove, where on December 7, 1862, Confederate and Union forces clashed in a fierce day of fighting that resulted in 2,700 casualties. This battle marked the last major Civil War engagement in Northwest Arkansas. The park offers walking and driving tours, programs, and weekend events. At the Hindman Hall Museum, artifacts recovered from the battle are displayed.

UPCOMING CIVIL WAR EVENTS

JANUARY 21, 2020

LINCOLN/DAVIS CWRT

"Artillery in the Civil War"

Speaker: Mike Ward

Country House Restaurant, Alsip, IL

lincolndavisroundtable@yahoo.com

JANUARY 23, 2020

SOUTH SUBURBAN CWRT

"Louisa May Alcott & the Civil War Era"

Speaker: Leslie Goddard

Smokey Barque, 20 Kansas St.

Frankfort, IL

www.southsuburbancwrt.com

FEBRUARY 3, 2020

2 OLD GOATS in Cedar Lake, IN

"1st Michigan Engineers"

Speaker: Brian Conroy

219-390-7183

FEBRUARY 7, 2020

NORTHERN ILLINOIS CWRT

"Chicago Battery"

Speaker: Wayne Rhine

Arlington Hts. Memorial Library

northernilcwrt.org

FEBRUARY 14, 2020

CHICAGO CWRT

"Wilson's Creek"

Speaker: Connie Langum

Holiday Inn O'Hare

5615 N. Cumberland, Chicago

dinnerreservation@chicagocwrt.org

FEBRUARY 18, 2020

LINCOLN/DAVIS CWRT

"Songs of the Civil War"

Battlefield Balladeers

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.

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 (630-401-6699)

BACK IN HISTORY

50 Years Ago: E.B. "Pete" Long presented: "The Lost Six Months of the Armies of Northern Virginia"

25 Years Ago: Art Foley presented: "Civil War Music"

10 Years Ago: Rob Girardi presented: "Abraham Lincoln's Doctor's Dog"

FUTURE SCCWRT MEETINGS

February 21, 2020

"The Sultana Disaster"

Speaker: Gene Salecker

March 20, 2020

"The Tyranny of Public Discourse"

Speaker: Dan VanHaften

THE SALT CREEK CWRT

www.saltcreekcwrt.org

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