

# The Outpost

**The Newsletter of the Salt Creek Civil War Round Table  
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## **499th Regular Meeting**

**DATE:** Friday, January 20, 2016  
**PLACE:** Oak Trace, 200 Village Drive, Downers Grove, IL  
**TIME:** 8:00 p.m.  
**TOPIC:** "The Rise and Fall of the GAR in Chicago"  
**SPEAKER:** Robert Girardi

The Grand Army of the Republic was founded as a fraternal organization in Decatur, Illinois in 1866 and survived well into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. In its heyday, it was both a premier social club for former soldiers as well as a political powerhouse that concerned itself with veterans' issues. The G.A.R. grew to a peak membership of 409,000 veterans in 1890. It sponsored annual reunions on both local and national levels. With the founding of the first Post, the G.A.R. became part of Chicago and the way the Civil War will be remembered in the Windy City. Chicago had as many as 34 active G.A.R. posts. Veterans of the war would be important players in the rise of the city. But time is a cruel master. Today, though there are many visible reminders of the grandeur and impact of the Civil War generation, it is easy for most people to pass by without giving it as much as a fleeting thought. How did the G.A.R. degenerate from being part of everyday life to a historical afterthought?

Rob is an author, historian, popular speaker and consultant on the American Civil War to audiences of all ages. He earned his Master's Degree in Public History at Loyola University in Chicago. He is past president of the Civil War Round Table of Chicago and past vice president and former newsletter editor of the Salt Creek CWRT. He is on the Board of Directors of the Illinois State Historical Society and the Camp Douglas Restoration Foundation. Rob is the 2010 recipient of the Chicago CWRT's Nevins-Freeman Award for scholarship and service and the 2014 recipient of the Milwaukee CWRT's Iron Brigade Association Award. He was the keynote speaker at the rededication of the Illinois Monument at Andersonville. Rob has authored or edited nine books, the tenth underway, as well as numerous articles and book reviews.