

The Outpost

The Newsletter of the Salt Creek Civil War Round Table
Vol. LVIX No. 7 March 2021



538th Regular Meeting

DATE: Friday, March 19, 2021
PLACE: Confines of your own home.
Due to Covid restrictions the meeting will be via zoom
TIME: 7:30 p.m.
TOPIC: “Friends, Family, Fraud and Corruption: The Story of Rueben Hatch”
SPEAKER: Gene Salecker

Capt. Reuben Benton Hatch was the man responsible for overloading almost 2,000 recently paroled Union prisoners-of-war on the Mississippi steamboat *Sultana*, a boat legally registered to carry only 376 passengers. When the boat exploded on April 27, 1865, almost 1,200 people died in the greatest maritime disaster in American history. A corrupt Union officer who relied on his family and friends, including President Abraham Lincoln and Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, Reuben Hatch never should have been in place to influence the overloading of the *Sultana*. Arrested for graft and corruption on two separate occasions during the Civil War, Hatch never spent one single hour before a court-martial. His family and influential friends always came to his rescue. Join us as Gene Eric Salecker tells the fascinating story of one of the most corrupt men in American history.

Gene Salecker, a well-known collector of *Sultana* artifacts and photographs, has been compiling data on the disaster since 1978. He has authored *Disaster on the Mississippi: The Sultana Explosion April 27, 1865* 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 a graduate of Northeastern Illinois University.

Join Zoom Meeting
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87455865140>
Meeting ID: 874 5586 5140
Passcode: 623540

FEBRUARY MEETING UPDATE

Dennis Doyle spoke via Zoom last month on the subject of “Illinois Regiments at Gettysburg, July, 1863”. Although the Army of the Potomac had only three Illinois regiments on the rolls for July of 1863, those units gave valorous service during the great battle. Illinois was represented by the 82nd Volunteer Infantry Regiment, and the 8th and 12th Volunteer Cavalry Regiments. Mr. Doyle prefaced talk of the battle with descriptions of the composition of each unit and their histories previous to July 1863.

Concerning actions at Gettysburg, the cavalry actions of late June, and the dispositions of July 1, were described. Dispersed tactically by Gen. John Buford to perform a defense in depth, hindering Confederate offensive thrusts west of Pennsylvania buying time until infantry elements could arrive, the 8th Illinois Cavalry held the distinction of firing the battle’s initial shot. Lt. Marcellus Jones, of Wheaton, Illinois, fired at a rebel officer. His actions have been memorialized on a plinth of Naperville limestone, positioned on the Ephram Whistler property. Stalling Confederate forays, the 8th and 12th held until Gen. John Reynolds’ 1st Corps and Gen. O. O. Howards’ 11th Corps could arrive. Afterwards these units guarded the 1st Corp’s left flank on July 1, until ordered to return to Westminster, Maryland for rest and refitting.

Arriving with the other units of the 11th Corps, the 82nd Illinois, also referred to as the “Illinois Dutch Regiment” was positioned in support of Dilger’s, 1st Ohio Light Battery on the far left of the 11th Corps line. In this position the Regiment faced mounting opposition from elements of Ewell’s Corps. Under a mounting rebel force, the 11th Corp elements line fractured, driving Howard’s men through the town, losing a portion to capture. The remnants of the 82nd reformed on Cemetery Ridge where they not only joined in resisting Confederate attacks but also sent elements into the neighboring buildings to flush enemy sharpshooters. Dennis described the actions of the unit officers, and instances of death incurred upon members of these units. The burial of the Illinois dead in the new National cemetery was also cited.

Throughout his presentation Dennis supplied a varied and interesting visual display. We thank Mr. Doyle for providing an informative and entertaining evening. Huzzah!

ALL FOR THE UNION

Membership renewals were due in January. Due to Covid restrictions a new meeting location might be needed. Alternative options are being considered. Membership support is appreciated and needed. THANKS to those who have already renewed their membership and THANKS to those who gave additional amounts for battlefield preservation.

VACANT CHAIR

Civil War historian and friend of the round table, Marshall Krolick, passed away after a long illness on February 17, 2021 at his home in Florida. He was a nationally-recognized expert on the Civil War, published author, battlefield tour guide and frequent speaker. His five presentations to Salt Creek spanned from 1973 through 2007, including two banquet presentations. His area of expertise included the 8th Illinois Cavalry and the Battle of Gettysburg. He will be missed by his many friends and colleagues. Memorials may be made to Friends of Gettysburg Foundation, 1195 Baltimore Pike, Gettysburg, PA 17325.

MARCH 2021 PRESERVATION REPORT
BY BRIAN CONROY

One of the largest ongoing preservation efforts that the American Battlefield Trust has at the moment is 108 acres of hallowed ground at Gaines' Mill and Cold Harbor, or what the Trust is calling "Pickett's Charge, Five Times as Large." It is part of a 5-year deal that is being separated into more manageable parts, with this being the first preservation project to be focused on, and has been listed by preservationists as a "must-have" for over two decades. This deal has a high level of confidentiality that has been requested by the landowner, and due to this effort being among the most expensive that the organization has ever faced, the Trust has been granted five full years to raise the necessary funds and must make timely payments each year, or risk defaulting on the agreement. The entire project is being called the "Gaines' Mill-Cold Harbor Saved Forever Campaign," and will bundle a total of three land parcels together that will total 108 acres on the same battlefield.

None of these parcels are eligible for federal funding due to where these properties are located, with the total transaction value of the 108 acres being \$1,411,000. Several major benefactors have stepped forward with significant personal gifts, and along with a major grant from the Lee-Jackson Educational Foundation, \$900,000 of that amount is already covered! This leaves a formidable amount of \$511,000 to be raised for this project, with every \$1 being given turned into \$2.76.

This property is one of a very few major battle sites from the Civil War where the same ground was fought on twice, and where nearly one square mile of a "double battlefield" can still be preserved. A nearly one-square mile farm outside of Richmond, Virginia was the site of two major Civil War battles, Gaines' Mill in 1862, and Cold Harbor in 1864.

On June 27, 1862, General Robert E. Lee's Confederates grappled mostly with Union General Fitz-John Porter's Fifth Corps in the Battle of Gaines' Mill – the third of the Seven Days Battles. Fast forward nearly two years to the Battle of Cold Harbor when Union General U.S. Grant tried to defeat Lee's Confederates on much of this same ground. Grant also launched one of the larger attacks of the Civil War on June 3, which was bloodily repulsed and spurred regret from Grant. The two assaults at these two battles totaled some 70,000 attacking soldiers from two armies over two years – on the same ground. The casualty count from these two battles is nearly 33,000 killed, wounded, and missing.

Historian Ed Bearss, who sadly passed away a few months ago at age 97, said in 2005 about this important piece of Civil War land:

"Even if you have to sell every other piece of battlefield land the Trust has ever saved in order to preserve this land, you should do it. It's that important!"

The preservation of this land today will allow generations to come to be able to walk this ground and learn about the courage, valor, and gallantry of American soldiers.

UPCOMING CIVIL WAR EVENTS

Check with the organization sponsoring the program for meeting status

March 16, 2021

Lincoln/Davis CWRT will feature Scott Mingus presenting “The Cumberland Valley Railroad in the Civil War” Country House Restaurant, Alsip, IL

March 25, 2021

South Suburban CWRT will feature Eric Benjamin presenting “The 82nd Illinois Regiment”
South Suburban CWRT on Facebook (ZOOM MEETING)

April 2, 2021

Northern Illinois CWRT will feature Pam Toler presenting “Nursing in the Civil War”
www.northernilcwr.org (ZOOM MEETING)

April 9, 2021

Chicago CWRT will feature Ron Kirkwood presenting “Too Much For Human Endurance: The Spangler Farms Hospital” www.chicagocwr.org (ZOOM MEETING)

April 10, 2021

Two Old Goats in Cedar Lake will feature Father Bob Miller presenting “The Original Fighting Irish: Notre Dame’s Civil War Chaplains”

April 24, 2021

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

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>

FUTURE SALT CREEK CWRT MEETINGS

Check us out on Facebook and at saltcreekcwr.org

April 16, 2021

Steve Alban will present “Benjamin Franklin Butler, Lincoln’s Most Trusted General”

May 21, 2021

Dan Van Haften will present “The Tyranny of Public Discourse: Abraham Lincoln’s Six Elements of Meaningful and Persuasive Writing”

BACK IN HISTORY

50 Years Ago: Thomas Perkins presented “The Battle of Hartsville, Tennessee”

25 Years Ago: Bill Hupp moderated a Panel Discussion: “Unsung Heroes of the Civil War”
Dan McCarthy discussed George Gordon Meade, Roger Bohn discussed “Jack Tar”,
Janet Linhart discussed Mary Livermore, Kevin Naughton discussed Elizatheth VanLew,
and Bill Hupp discussed James Harrison Wilson.

10 Years Ago: Ray Glick presented “The Use and Role of the Mule in the Civil War”

THE SALT CREEK CWRT

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