

# The Outpost

The Newsletter of the Salt Creek Civil War Round Table  
Vol. LVIII No. 7 March 2020



531th Regular Meeting

**DATE:** Friday, March 20, 2020  
**PLACE:** Oak Trace, 200 Village Drive, Downers Grove, IL  
**TIME:** 8:00 p.m.  
**TOPIC:** *"The Tyranny of Public Discourse: Abraham Lincoln's Six-Element Antidote for Meaningful and Persuasive Writing"*  
**SPEAKER:** Dan Van Haften

Author Dan Van Haften describes through several Abraham Lincoln letters related to the Civil War the method for persuasion Lincoln learned from his study of Euclidean plane geometry. These letters are taken from his new book, *The Tyranny of Public Discourse: Abraham Lincoln's Six-Element Antidote for Meaningful and Persuasive Writing*. This book teaches step-by-step how to use Lincoln's method. Dan's talk describes how Lincoln's letters and writings demonstrate a language of science for human issues. This is a verbal form of the scientific method.

Dan Van Haften's first book, *Abraham Lincoln and the Structure of Reason*, was published in 2010. Co-authored with Des Moines attorney David Hirsch, this book revealed Abraham Lincoln's method for composing important speeches and letters. Their fifth book, *The Tyranny of Public Discourse: Abraham Lincoln's Six-Element Antidote for Meaningful and Persuasive Writing*, was released by Savas Beatie in 2019. Dan is a resident of Batavia.

## **FEBRUARY MEETING UPDATE BY ART FOLEY**

“Disaster on the Mississippi”, the February presentation from Gene Eric Salecker, recounted the sad tale of the Sultana explosion during the early hours of April 27, 1865. Claiming the lives of over 1169 souls, there was a special poignancy to this disaster. Many of the victims had survived the trials of Andersonville or Cahaba prisoner of war camps. Boarding the Sultana, physically compromised and fated to an event that would tax the resources of the healthiest individual, they were thrust upon the icy waters of the great river during flood stage.

Mr. Salecker’s expertise on the subject was highlighted by a remarkable Powerpoint. He provided illustrations that clarified how the steamship’s boilers operated and the occurrences that led to the explosion. Movement of events and ignoring cautionary objections strained the operational status of the ship. The Captain presented with the possibility to raise much needed funds, crammed bodies on the decks. There was a critical lack of firefighting buckets because they were otherwise appropriated to carry human waste. The amount of cargo including a number of horses and livestock, and a crated alligator also factored in the tragedy.

Mr. Salecker utilized a photograph, taken on the day previous to the disaster, illustrating not only the position of various individuals or groups, but to show visible crowding, as well as the lack of facilities to accommodate the physical needs of the passengers. The wheelhouse bore the streaks of human waste from the primitive facilities. The open private deck showed the figure of a crew member, a female songstress. Horses could be observed on the main deck as well. The Elk antlers mounted on the cross supports of the stacks were a testament to previous speedy passages.

We followed the relating of events leading to the explosion, the dramatic movement of the ship as it was consumed by flames and the panicked reactions of the passengers. Stories of survival or death depended on chance. Memories of survivors and rescuers were retold. Finally, the events of the time which pushed news of the calamity away from the headlines were recounted.

Mr. Salecker brought a number of prints, books and pieces of the boiler retrieved from the Arkansan soybean field under which the Sultana rests. Information as to the status of the Sultana museum and other projects being undertaken to remember the event were discussed.

A delightful presentation! I applaud Mr. Salecker’s expertise and skill in relating this event with fervor. Huzzah! Huzzah! Huzzah!

## **FACILITY UPDATE**

Last month a new entrance was opened at Oak Trace on the opposite side of the building. THERE ARE NOW MORE PARKING SPACES CLOSER TO THE DOOR.

Additional parking is also closer. If you need assistance, ask at the front desk or call the Onsite Transportation & Security at (630-401-6699). There are plenty of parking spaces available.

## **PRESERVATION REPORT BY BRIAN CONROY**

Welcome to Spring! Hopefully everyone survived another Chicagoland winter, and are ready to get out exploring all the wonderful battlefields and historic sites that the country has to offer. This month's preservation report goes into the back-to-back states of Virginia and North Carolina as we see the preservation effort at the battles of the Wilderness, Cold Harbor, and Bentonville. At stake are 185 acres of irreplaceable Civil War history connected by valor, bloodshed, and desperation fought in different landscapes with some important things in common.

The Battle of the Wilderness began Grant's 1864 Overland Campaign, which showed his determination in pursuing the end of the war. This ultimately led to stalemate battles, leading eventually to Robert E. Lee's surrender at Appomattox in April 1865. The 36 acres at stake today are immediately behind the Confederate lines, where Alabama troops launched a counterattack against the Union line that ultimately broke through their lines. This parcel saw artillery rounds and troop movements, where one wing of General George Meade's Union forces tried to hammer their way through Lee's entrenched Confederates for the better part of two days, May 5th and 6th, 1864.

The battle of Cold Harbor was regretted by Grant, specifically for the final assault, where in Grant's own words, "no advantage whatever was gained to compensate for the heavy loss we sustained." Yet Cold Harbor was also a critical step in the Union's journey that carried them south across the James River, and to the backdoor of the Confederate capital of Richmond, Petersburg. The 5-acre tract at stake today connects to a much larger portion that Trust members like you saved a few years ago, adding another crucial piece of the puzzle that will eventually result in a well-preserved battlefield. On June 1, an XVIII Corps division advanced over this ground to attack a Confederate position. This parcel, on and immediately behind the main Union line, was continuously occupied by Federal troops from June 1 through June 12, 1864. With residential and commercial development relentlessly rolling outward from Richmond toward this hallowed ground, this tract is essential to our progress at Cold Harbor.

And finally, the massive three-day Battle of Bentonville is often overlooked, despite the fact that in 1993 Congress declared it one of the eleven most important pieces of hallowed ground in America for preservation. Thirty years ago, there were only a few acres of protected land at this incredibly important site, the last full-scale action of the Civil War. In hundreds of letters, diaries and reports, men on both sides bore witness to the ferocity of this three-day battle, saying things like "all agree that it was one of the hottest places we were ever in." Thanks to Trust partners and supporters like you, we've now preserved 1,864 acres, and this transaction, saving even more of the second day's sector of the battlefield, will add another 144 preserved acres, putting us over 2,000 acres of saved hallowed ground.

The donation match for these three battlefields is a \$10.43:\$1, with the ultimate goal being \$161,375 for 185 acres.

## **UPCOMING CIVIL WAR EVENTS**

MARCH 26, 2020

### **SOUTH SUBURBAN CWRT**

"Civil War Ironclads & their Naval Battles"

Speaker: Don Chamberlain

Smokey Barque, 20 Kansas St.

Frankfort, IL

[www.southsuburbancwrt.com](http://www.southsuburbancwrt.com)

APRIL 3, 2020

### **NORTHERN ILLINOIS CWRT**

"Telegraphs in the Civil War"

Speaker: Jack Hudson

Arlington Hts. Memorial Library

[northernilcwrt.org](http://northernilcwrt.org)

APRIL 6, 2020

### **2 OLD GOATS in Cedar Lake, IN**

"Before the Chicago Cubs: Baseball Comes to the Windy City"

Speaker: Bruce Allardice

219-390-7183

APRIL 14, 2020

### **McHENRY COUNTY CWRT**

"The Great Locomotive Chase"

Speaker: Phil Angelo

Woodstock Public Library

[www.mchenrycivilwar.com](http://www.mchenrycivilwar.com)

APRIL 17, 2020

### **CHICAGO CWRT**

"Recollections of the 1<sup>st</sup> Virginia Cavalry"

Speaker: Michael Shaffer

Holiday Inn O'Hare

5615 N. Cumberland, Chicago

[dinnerreservation@chicagocwrt.org](mailto:dinnerreservation@chicagocwrt.org)

APRIL 21, 2020

### **LINCOLN/DAVIS CWRT**

"General Lee's Immortals"

Speaker: Michael Hardy

Country House Restaurant, Alsip, IL

[lincolndavisroundtable@yahoo.com](mailto:lincolndavisroundtable@yahoo.com)

APRIL 25, 2020

### **CHICAGO CIVIL WAR SHOW**

DuPage Co. Fairgrounds-Wheaton

[www.ChicagoCivilWarShow.com](http://www.ChicagoCivilWarShow.com)

## **ALL FOR THE UNION**

The SCCWRT website is back.

Brian Conroy has taken over the SCCWRT Facebook Page.

## **BACK IN HISTORY**

**50 Years Ago:** Elmer Brinkman presented:  
"The Military Career of Benjamin Prentiss"

**25 Years Ago:** Rob Girardi presented:  
"Capt. Henry W. Chester and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Ohio Cavalry"

**10 Years Ago:** Dr. Ray Glick presented:  
"The Use and Role of the Horse and Mule During the Civil War"

## **FUTURE SCCWRT MEETINGS**

April 17, 2020

"The Battle of Honey Springs: Reconquest Of the Frontier"

Speaker: Art Foley

May 15, 2020

"History of the Grand Army of the Republic"

Speaker: Terry Dyer

June 19, 2020 ANNUAL BANQUET

"The Grand Review: Discoveries and Explorations in Civil War Photography"

Speaker: Robert Zeller

DOUBLETREE Lisle Naperville by Hilton

## **THE SALT CREEK CWRT**

[www.saltcreekcwrt.org](http://www.saltcreekcwrt.org)

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