

GENERAL ORDERS



The Newsletter of the

**Civil War Round Table of Milwaukee, Inc.
and The Iron Brigade Association**



February 11, 2016

Don H. Doyle, Ph.D.

The Cause of all Nations:

An International History of the American Civil War

When Abraham Lincoln delivered the Gettysburg Address he had broader aims over and above rallying his war-weary nation. Lincoln knew that the Civil War now had an audience outside of the country and that both Europe and Latin America were watching us – watching to see if the United States would “perish from the earth.”

Our February speaker, Don Doyle, will address the international ramifications of the Civil War.

For over 150 years most have treated the American Civil War as a quintessential American story, a war fought on American soil, by American soldiers, over issues that were distinctly American, and with consequences almost entirely confined to the United States. Professor Doyle takes us outside this introspective national narrative to ask: what did “our” Civil War mean to the rest of the world and why? While most foreigners had little interest in this quarrelsome democracy’s debates over the Constitution, states’ rights, and secession, some quickly came to define the American contest as an epic battle over the future of what they called the “republican experiment,” that radical idea that a society based on principles of equality and popular sovereignty could govern themselves without descending into anarchy or despotism. Doyle recalls the voices distant opinion leaders from Karl Marx to Giuseppe Garibaldi, whose interpretations of the war resounded with great effect on public opinion abroad. He also emphasizes the long neglected role of immigrant soldiers who saw the American war as a continuation of the ones they and their parents had fought and lost in Europe. His talk will focus briefly on the important and neglected role of German soldiers in the Union army (among them the author’s great-great grandfather, Frederick Salmon of Manitowoc, Wisconsin). For them and over forty percent of the Union army who were immigrants and the sons of immigrants America’s Civil War became the cause of all nations.

Don H. Doyle is the McCausland Professor of History at the University of South Carolina. He was educated at the University of California, Davis, (BA 1967) and Northwestern University (Ph.D. 1973). He taught at the University of Michigan- Dearborn, Vanderbilt University, and the University of South Carolina. He has also been a Fulbright professor in Rome, Genoa, and Rio de Janeiro, a visiting scholar in Leeds, London, and Florence, and Archie K. Davis Fellow at the National Humanities Center. He is the author of several books including *Faulkner’s Country* and *Nations Divided: America, Italy, and the Southern Question* and the editor of *Nationalism in the New World* (with Marco Pamplona) and *Secession as an International Phenomenon*. He is currently working on a book on the international response to Lincoln’s assassination and the resurgence of republican revolutions, reforms, and slave emancipations that followed. Dr. Doyle lives in Columbia, South Carolina.

General Orders No. 2-16

February 2016

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February Meeting at a Glance Country Club of the Wisconsin Club 6200 WEST GOOD HOPE ROAD

[Jackets required for the dining room.]

6:15 p.m. - Registration/Social Hour

6:45 p.m. - Dinner

[\$30 by reservation, please]

Reservations are accepted until

Monday, February 8, 2016

7:30 p.m. - Program

Speaker and topic are subject to change. In case of inclement weather, listen to WTMJ or WISN for meeting status.

2015-2016 Speaker Schedule

February 11, 2016 – Don Doyle
“The Cause of All Nations”

March 10, 2016 – Bruce Kraig
“Why the Civil War Made Our Modern Food”

April 7, 2016 – Greg Biggs
“Nashville: Siren’s Song of the Confederacy”

May 12, 2016 – Glenna Schroeder-Lein
“The Soldiers’ Home in Civil War America”

June 9, 2016 – Dale Phillips
“Ben Butler and the Federal Occupation of New Orleans”

milwaukeeecwrt.org

Civil War Round Table News

When Reservations are Cancelled

Please be aware that cancellations of dinner reservations within 48 hours of the meeting are subject to payment in full. The MCWRT is charged for these dinners whether they are used or not!

Your Cooperation is Appreciated

“Walk-in dinner” requests are sometimes difficult to honor. Remember, dinner reservations are to be made at least 48 hours prior to the meeting date. We are always happy to accommodate where possible, but we cannot always guarantee a dinner that evening if you have not called in or emailed your reservation. Thank you for your understanding.

Special Dietary Needs

We have quite a number of regular members who have opted for special entrees as options to the regular dinner being served. The Wisconsin Club and the Round Table will make every effort to meet any special dietary needs you may have. As a courtesy, **please give a reminder when making your reservations**, so we don't forget to serve you what you're expecting!

Iron Brigade Flags on Display

If you attend our upcoming meetings, you may notice that something is different. Our usual array of flags (the reproduction Tiffany Iron Brigade flag, the 35-star U.S. flag and Battery B, 4th U.S. artillery guidon) will not be present. The flags have been loaned to the Kenosha Civil War Museum for their new exhibit, "Faces of the Iron Brigade: A Social Network of Soldiers." The exhibit will be on display at the museum until November 1, 2016. Go visit our flags at the Civil War Museum!

A Little Extra for the Iron Brigade & the Civil War Museum

As part of the “Faces of the Iron Brigade” exhibit taking place at the Kenosha Civil War Museum, there will be an exhibit reception and program on April 23, 2016. The program will include actor Stacy Hicks portraying Mickey Sullivan (“Mickey of Company K”), as well as other events related to the Iron Brigade exhibit. The Kenosha Museum approached the Civil War Round Table about sponsoring this event, and the Board of Directors thought it logical to do so as we are the custodian of the Iron Brigade Association, founded by the veterans. Beginning at the January meeting, and continuing through the end of February, the Round Table will be soliciting donations from members to sponsor this event. Think about pitching in to help the Iron Brigade!

The Muster Roll: NEW MEMBERS

[illegible]

MCWRT Annual Fund

The following members have made a generous commitment to the MCWRT by investing in that fund. This list reflects those donations made from July 1 through November 13, 2015.

Major Contributor (\$500 and above)

Patron (\$200 - \$499)

Crain Bliwas, Stephen Leopold, Robert Parrish

Associate (\$100 - \$199)

Paul Eilbes, Bill Finke, Randall Garczynski,
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Reeve, David & Helga Sartori, Dennis Slater,
Paul Sotirin, Wisconsin Civil War Sesquicentennial
Commission

Contributor (up to \$99)

George Affeldt, T. James Blake, John & Linda Connelly, Tom Corcoran, Dr. Gordon Dammann, Michael Deeken, Bob Dude, Lori Duginski, Gary and Judith Ertel, Ted Fetting, Richard Gross, Richard Heaps, Tim and Nicole Hirthe, Dr. Erwin Huston, Eugene and Jane Jamrozy, Christopher E. Johnson, Dr. Robert Karczewski, Allan Kasprzak, Ardis Kelling, Jerome Kowalski, Jay Lauck, Fredric Madsen, Jerry & Donna Martynski, Rodney W. Malinowski, M.D., Kenneth & Mary Ellen Nelson, Herbert Oechler, Tom Olsen, John Rodahl, Chet Rohn, Jean Schwonek WE Energies Foundation (Gift Match) Dan Tanty, Gil Vrancey, Fred Wendorf

Thank You from Dan Joyce, Civil War Museum

Our Round Table presented a \$1000 check to Doug Dammann at our December meeting. The donation will help fund lectures and programs at the Civil War Museum in 2016. In his thank you letter to our organization, Director Dan Joyce wrote:

Thank you and the Round Table so much for your continued support. There are many programs that this donation supports, which brings Civil War history to life!



In February 1954 Ralph Newman talked to the Round Table on “Has the Lincoln Theme Been Exhausted?”

Paul Simon was our Round Table speaker in February 1964 speaking on “State Representative Abraham Lincoln.”

“The Prophecy of Nathan Bedford Forrest” was the topic of Richard Orr Baker’s presentation to the Round Table in February 1974.

Alan T. Nolan spoke to the Round Table in February 1984 about “The Iron Brigade – Some Last Words.”

In February 1994 Robert V. Remini discussed “Henry Clay, Slavery and the Coming of the Civil War.”

At last year’s February meeting, Leslie Goddard spoke to our group on “Why *Gone With the Wind* Still Matters.”

COMING ATTRACTIONS

February 8, 2016

Manitowoc Civil War Round Table, 7 p.m.
Manitowoc Historical Society Heritage Center

February 9, 2016

Waukesha Civil War Round Table, 7 p.m.
Citizens Bank of Mukwonago Waukesha Branch
General Grant and Mrs. Grant After the War

February 23, 2016

Prairieville Irregulars Civil War Round Table, 7 p.m.
Citizens Bank of Mukwonago Waukesha Branch
Speaker: Dave Meyers: Civil War Railroading

Behind the Scenes Tour of the Civil War Museum Tuesday, March 8, 2016, 6:30 p.m. – 8 p.m.

Join curator Doug Dammann as he leads a behind the scenes tour of the different galleries and spaces of the Civil War Museum. Whether you have never been to the Museum or have been there many times before, you will learn something new on this tour. \$25/\$20 Friends of the Museum

In Memoriam

Betty Jane Kuhnmuench, mother of Round Table member John Kuhnmuench, passed away on the eve of the New Year. John’s mother was 94. Betty Jane was a longtime resident of Fox Point

Martin Gadzichowski, Round Table member since 1999, passed away on December 15, 2015. Gadzichowski was a retired designer of structural steel. He helped build Discovery World’s Denis Sullivan and sailed on it as a volunteer educator and summer crew member.

Kenosha Civil War Museum Second Friday Lunchbox Series

The series is a free program sponsored by the Milwaukee Civil War Round Table and Iron Brigade Association.

Confederate Christian Warrior — Fr. James Sheeran of the 14th Louisiana Friday, February 12, 2016, Noon

Presented by Father Robert Miller.

Based on an original unedited diary, Fr. Miller discusses the military experiences of Father James Sheeran, an Irish immigrant priest who served as one of only a handful of Catholic chaplains with the Confederate Army.

Chicago Backs the Boys in the Civil War Friday, March 11, 2016, Noon

Presented by Kurt Carlson.

With the secession of the southern states and the start of the Civil War, a major financial crisis occurred in the emerging city of Chicago. But Chicago’s businesses were called on to back the boys in the US military, and doing so would both spur the city’s industrialization and end the financial crash.

Civil War Medical Weekend

Saturday, February 20, 2016, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Sunday, February 21, 2016, Noon - 4 p.m.

This annual event is a weekend filled with living history, programs, and exhibits commemorating the role of doctors, nurses, and caregivers during the Civil War. Surgeons and nurses of the 17th Corps Medical Staff will set up camp inside the Museum. The Corps will demonstrate a variety of surgical techniques including bullet removal, brain surgery, and amputation.

Wounded in the Cornfield

Saturday, February 20, 2016, 1 p.m.

Presented by Dr. Gordon Dammann.

Hear the story of a Wisconsin soldier from the famed Iron Brigade after he was wounded at the Battle of Antietam. Follow the journey of these men and the care they received through the Letterman Plan instituted by the Union Army.

Fort Sumter, March 4th to April 12th, 1861

Saturday, February 27, 2016, 1 p.m. – 3 p.m.

On March 5, 1861, the day after his inaugural ball, Abraham Lincoln was informed that Major Anderson in Fort Sumter was nearly out of provisions. A Cabinet meeting was called and all agreed to send supplies to Major Anderson. Simple enough, but the series of events that occurred in the weeks leading up to the firing on Fort Sumter would make that decision anything but simple for Lincoln and the country. Provisioning Fort Sumter and sending reinforcements could lead to civil war. \$25/\$20 Friends of the Museum

See page 6 for information about these Museum events:

- **CIVIL WAR EXPO**
- **FACES OF THE IRON BRIGADE DINNER**
- **THIRD ANNUAL CIVIL WAR MUSEUM HOME FRONT SEMINAR**



Helena

March 8th, 1863

Dear Cousin Chank

I take this opportunity to answer your very kind letter recd day before yesterday. I am well and enjoying good health and I hope that this will find you the same. A week ago last Sunday we went down to the cold water pass and stayed there one week. We left with two days rations and had to live on them the week we were encamped at a large plantation. The owners name was Alcorne. He has been a brig general in the rebel army but was taken prisoner by the United States forces and paroled. He had 3000 acres of land and some of as pretty girls as ever I saw but they would not speak to a Yankee seces up to the hilt. We lived well while we were there. We had fresh port and beef that we could lay to and corn dodgers. We got the niggers to bake them for us and we lived in the nigger quarters and got as lousely as the Devil. We had a nice time of it you better believe. My good friends down in Ill are crawling around now. I received a letter from Alice Jenks. It was Dear Uncle. I don't thank them at all. They can go as General Gorman says plumb to hell in general for all me I guess. They will find out that I am independent of them. Lydia can write to me and I suppose that I must write to her in order to keep peace with her. She wanted to know what I had done with my money. She didn't get any satisfaction. I suppose that my business you wanted me to be a good boy. You knew that is natural.

...and shoot all the damned rebels. I have not had but one shot at a rebel since I have been in the south. I think that it was a close call for him for I have got a rifle that will pick one 500 yards and I think that we will have a chance to try our guns in a few days. They say our division is ordered to ready to march in short notice. All our Colonel wants is one half day and the 29 will be ready. I think that we will go to Vicksburg but cant tell. I am sure that I don't care. I am ready for any thing reasonable. We have not got any pay yet but expect it in a few days. I hope we will for I am strapped. You say that you have not recd any letter from me stating that I had recd 5 dollars. I received it about new years and a more thankful boy you never say. I am very much obliged to you and will do as much for you when I get home. I suppose that two of Cap Dunhams men that was taken prisoners have got home. They love their country but not well enough to fight for it. When you see this child face there it will be when I have an honorable discharge. I enlisted to see this war out to an end and fight and if I fall I will fall doing my duty. I don't know but I will have to get you to send me some more money. I must get me a pair of boots to keep my feet dry. It will depend upon how much they pay us. If I want any I will let you know. I don't think of much more to write this time.

Give my love to all the folks. Tell the children to be good and go to school all the time. They can tell Uncle Chauncey that I am the same old Ben that would like to show him how to catch rats. Good night.

Ben Wilbur, Co. E, 29th Wisconsin

Helena, Arkansas

March 5, 1863

Thursday Evening 10:00 p.m.

Dear Sister Polly,

Williamson received a letter from Isaac the 26th day of February which letter I inclose to you.

Williamson being unable to go after him on account of his wife being sick. I on the first started and arrived here yesterday morning.

I found my Brother Isaac very sick in the Hospital, he new me as quic as he saw me.

He wished me to procure his discharge as quic as I could.

I immediately got the papers in motion and they will undoubtedly be all signed by tomorrow morning and then he will be discharged, and if I can rais him from his sick bed I will do it. It seemed to prighiten him up when I told him his discharge was sure, for the doctor promised me, that they would discharge him. But he seems to day and to night to be a getting weaker. he is as helpless to night as a child.

He says he has and does but his trust in God. He say's God has forgiven his sins, and he thinks he is a going Home alive. I think 3 days will deside wether he will get well or not. if the Doctors check his diaries I think we can raise him. I am staying rite by him and will do everything I can for my Dear Brother and start home with him as quick as he has strength to endure the journey. Isaac thinks he is agoing to get well.

He is perfectly rational in his mind all of the time.

4 o'clock Friday Morning, march 6th.

Isaac has given up to die he thinks he cannot live long.

2 o'clock Friday in the afternoon. Isaac is yet a live but I have given him up. If he dies his remans I will send home and I think I will go clere through with him, any way as far as Cairo. If I can rais him I will Polley, he is my dier Brother and I love him. I have stop his discharge from the army until I see wether he will live or die. I have a chance to send this by a man from Wisconsin.

Yours truly,

P.S. I have staid right by him and am how with him. He is perfectly rational this far and I think will be untill he dies.

J. M. Poe

March 6th 1863

Friday Knight

Isaac died fifteen minutes before 11 o'clock P.M. He died very easy. He wished very much to see his family before he died. He praid fervently for his family. I have marked his coffin for Oconomowoc, Wisconsin. His thing wer all but up in the hospital. In his haversack which I have not look at nor see. His pocket book has two dollar in it and one half and he was paid \$16 – 60 cents the day before he died making in full nineteen dollars & 10 cents. I have not paid out one cent of his money. I will send it all to you some way. I have Cairo Ill. I have but Isaac remains in the care of Francis Vaughn of Hartland 9½ miles from Oconomowoc. Mr. Vaughn has the remains of his nephew also with him. Mr. Vaughn will inform you immediately upon the arrival of Isaac at Oconomowoc. Mr. Vaughn has come all the way from Helena Arkansas with me and as he is going right through I will go home by the way of Cincinnati.

7th

Isaac is in a zink lined coffin. It cost \$40.00 forty dollars. I promised Isaac I would take his remains home.

Write me a letter as soon as you can.

8th

Isaac is rapt in his blankets with a cottin piller under his head. I done the best I could with him it was so hard to get things in Hellena Arkansas.

I have numbered these slips of papers on corners so you can read them in rotation.

J. M. Poe

Shield Office Helena Ark

February 27 1863

To all at Home:

I have not heard from you for nearly a month, not since the 27th of January and I would like to know why you don't answer my letters or if you do write they do not get to me very regularly and I have not received a League but once since I have been in the office and I would like one of them very much.

I have nothing to do with the paper now but have fitted up a job office. I have got two job presses and plenty of type there and two others helping me. I have all the work I can do have to print for six Genls, for the Provost Marshall, and for Quartermasters without number plenty of work and glad to get it, for it is idleness that kills a great number of soldiers. I have got a good room in the same building with the other office. But I must tell you about my visit last Sunday. I was invited out in the afternoon and had a splendid supper of chicken, fine sweet potatoes, roast turkey, coffee, pie and cake with everything to fill in between. Dont you think I get good living enough after supper we went into the parlor and played and sang the rest of the evening there were some excellent singers from the 47th Indiana present and I had a splendid time. I like this kind of soldiering first rate and as long as I am in the office I think I shall I am in good health and getting fat. Never felt better in my life but for all that I wish this war would end soon if it is going to, for the way soldiers are dying here would discourage most any one. There is an average of five die a day and that will apt to think the army out some.

The guerillas are as thick as bees outside of the picket line but we do nothing to keep them away. I see the Semi-weekly Wisconsin twice a week with startling news from Vicksburg which is all made up for there is nothing passed here in a long time and I know we would hear from there as quick as they would in Wisconsin. The troops have been paid off for two months. I have not got mine yet but expect to soon. I think most of the forces will leave here soon. I dont know which way they will go, some say they are going to Tenn but I think that they are going to Vicksburg again but only guess of course. The mud is drying up a little now for it has not rained for the past three days and has been pretty warm things look like spring here now grass looks quite green. The Jews here are making money out of the soldiers here now they are paid off. The stores are full and you will meet a soldier with a new hat, boots, paper, pens, knives, pencils and everything you can think of, but the most of them take something else, whiskey. Every one you meet is drunk or nearly so. It is this kind that die and no wonder as long as they have a cent they are drunk. I have seen more drunkenness since I have been in the service than I ever want to see again and I should think it would cure a hard drinker to see it as it is here.

Yours in Hope

Lloyd V Nanscawen

MAIL CALL

Washington, DC, April 20th 1865

Carver U.S. Genl Hospital

Dear Sister

I hope this will find you all in good health as it leaves me at present. I want you to write to me often for I will be home soon and then you can rest easy on that score. Dear Clem you have all heard of the Death of President Lincoln. I will not say much about it at present. But when I come home I will tell you all about it for I was at the Theatre when it happened and saw the assassination and nearly everything else which happened on that eventfull night.(the 15th of April) I will only say here I never want to see such another night

Yesterday (the 19th) the funeral Ceramonies took place in Washington and it was sad and magnificently grand in every respect the best attended and I believe the largest funeral ever held in this country. The rebels in killing him lost thier best friend. Abraham Lincolns policy was mercy. Andrew Johnsons is justice and the northern traitors must take care and guard thier speech and actions henceforth. A Democratic northren copperhead said (on the Avenue in this city) that Lincoln caused many better men than he to be killed and it was no more than right he should be shot.

I saw a soldier shoot the traitor down dead on the spot and the People said it was right, and so do I. it is right let us have no more treason from the north nor south east or west. But since we have conquered armed Rebellion we must for our future safety have no compromise with the unarmed treason at home. One God. One Country. One People here, now and forever. Union and loyalty. Justice and Retribution. The day of mercy is past. every loyal man is a avenger and his children after him.

Write soon and my love to my little girl and my respects to you and your husband.

your affectionate brother "Bill"



BETWEEN THE COVERS

Brigades of Gettysburg: The Union and Confederate Brigades at the Battle of Gettysburg

by Bradley M. Gottfried

The *Brigades of Gettysburg* is a book that probably isn't jumping off the shelves but I found that it contains a lot of interesting information, perhaps too much detail, but is an excellent research source. The book covers in great detail the actions and movements of each infantry brigade, Union and Confederate, at the Battle of Gettysburg. If you are looking for information on artillery or cavalry units you will be disappointed; this book does not address those units. However, there are other books out there to satisfy readers interested in those arms of service at Gettysburg.

The book is broken down into sections starting with the Union Army. The chapters are organized by each Army Corps with a brief description of the Corps' history and the actions taken by each Corps at the battle. Additionally, a synopsis is provided for each division of each Corps detailing the division's history, their previous battles, and the organization it belonged to previously. The same treatment is given to each brigade in the division and that is where the meat of the book is found.

The brigade descriptions show the regiments contained in the brigade, total starting strength and casualties suffered during the battle. Mr. Gottfried provides, in great detail, the brigade's movements and actions during the battle. A good job is done using first person accounts of the actions of the regiment and brigade during the battle. At the end of each division section, the author provides an extensive list of notes, reference books and documents, which enable the reader to explore the unit's actions during the battle in greater detail; other books that may be of interest on the subject are also provided.

At the beginning of the book, you will find detailed maps of the areas of action for all three days of the Gettysburg battle. I would recommend this book to anyone who has a deep interest in the Battle of Gettysburg; it would make a fine addition to your library. I will stress that the book is more a research book than one for casual reading on the subject. If you are looking for the latter, *Gettysburg, The Last Invasion* by Allen Guelzo might be a better choice. The book is also an excellent resource for additional source material on the battle.

submitted by Bruce Klem

CIVIL WAR EXPO

Saturday, March 12, 2016, 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Living history, heritage groups, and Civil War Round Tables from around the Midwest will present samples of their programming and have informational tables set up throughout the Museum to introduce visitors to their Civil War interpretation.

12 p.m. Songs of the Civil War

Musical performance by the Old Soldier Fiddlers

1 p.m. Company E of the Calico 6th

David Wege presents personal stories and information on the men of Company E, 6th Wisconsin, a unit that was part of the famed Iron Brigade of the West.

THIRD ANNUAL CIVIL WAR MUSEUM HOME FRONT SEMINAR

Saturday, April 2, 2016

Dr. Betsy Estilow: Patriots in Petticoats: Southern Women and Medical Care During the Civil War

Kristin Patterson: Extra Pay for Wisconsin Civil War Families

Dr. Margo Anderson, UW-Milwaukee: Counting Slaves and Free Persons: How the 1860 Census Affected the Civil War

Mr. Scott Wolfe: "Putting Up Packages": Ulysses S. Grant and Galena, Illinois

\$50/\$40 Friends of the Museum. Price includes catered lunch.

Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. the first program starting at 9:30 a.m.

Register by calling: 262-653-4140

JOLIET JUNIOR COLLEGE CIVIL WAR SYMPOSIUM

April 30, 2016 "Legacy, Social Change, and Remembrance"

Joliet Jr College, 1215 Houboldt Ave, Joliet, 60431

Registration 8:30 – 9:30 a.m. Program begins at 10 a.m.

Don Doyle: The Cause of All Nations: International Impact of Civil War

Robert Girardi: Illinois in the Civil War

Doug Hurt: Agriculture, Food Production and the Civil War

Theodore "Ted" J. Karamanski: Chicago During the Civil War

Nicholas Sambaluk: Revolution and Use of Technology During Civil War

Registration by April 1 - \$20 per person. After April 1, \$40 per person

For further information email Professor Dennis Doyle: ddoyle@jjc.edu

Civil War Museum, Kenosha, WI

Celebration Dinner: Faces of the Iron Brigade

Saturday, April 23

5:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

Join the Civil War Museum for an evening celebrating the opening of our new temporary exhibit *Faces of the Iron Brigade--A Social Network of Soldiers*. The event begins with a reception and behind the scenes look at the exhibit with museum staff. Following the reception, a dinner will be held after which author Lance Herdegen will set the stage for a recreation of part of the Iron Brigade Association Reunion at Lancaster, Wisconsin, in 1884. To top off the evening, a special performance of the Civil War Museum's theater program, *James P. Sullivan--Mickey of Company K*, will be held in the Fiery Trial exhibit.

A SAVAS BEATIE INTERVIEW WITH SHERIDAN R. BARRINGER

*Author of **Fighting for Lee: Confederate General Rufus Barringer
and the North Carolina Cavalry Brigade***

SB: Hello Sheridan. Thanks for talking about your book with us today. First off, who was General Rufus Barringer? Please describe his life and military career.

SRB: Rufus Barringer was the last commander of the North Carolina Cavalry Brigade in the Civil War. He was born on December 2, 1821, in Mount Pleasant, North Carolina. He, like three of his brothers, served in the North Carolina Legislature. He advocated a progressive awakening of the old North Carolina state, supporting railroad expansion to aid commerce and campaigning for educational, judicial, and other progressive reforms. He supported free suffrage, which would permit citizens to vote for their senators in the legislature, regardless of whether or not they were landowners. He was against secession, but when President Lincoln called for the troops from North Carolina to help put down the rebellion, Rufus joined those supporting immediate secession. He raised a company of cavalry, the Cabarrus Rangers, and was elected its captain. The company became part of the famed 1st North Carolina Cavalry Regiment, commanded by West Point graduate Robert Ransom. Rufus was severely wounded at Brandy Station on June 9, 1863.

SB: *What happened after his wounding?*

SRB: He missed the Gettysburg campaign due to the seriousness of his wound. He returned to action in October of 1863, having been promoted to major and then lieutenant colonel while on sick leave. After the brigade commander, Brig. Gen. James B. Gordon, was killed on May 12, 1864, Barringer bypassed the rank of colonel and was promoted to brigadier general in command of the North Carolina Cavalry Brigade. He was captured on April 3, 1865 at Namozine Church in Amelia County. He was confined at the dreaded Fort Delaware Prison Camp until late July 1865. Returning home a war hero, he urged acceptance of Reconstruction as a post war Republican. He ran for Lt. Governor in 1880, but lost. He died of stomach cancer in 1895 and was buried in Charlotte.

SB: *Why did you decide to write a book about him?*

SRB: I have always liked history. After watching the Ken Burns series on the Civil War, my enthusiasm increased dramatically. During that period, I was also interested in researching the genealogy of my North Carolina Barringer family. My great-grandfather was named Rufus Barringer – a cousin of General Rufus Barringer. While researching my Rufus Barringer, I kept coming across all sorts of records for General Barringer and became interested in learning all I could about him. A few years later, I met one of the general's grandsons on a Civil War tour of the Petersburg battlefields. We became fast friends. He was interested in finding someone to write his grandfather's life story.

SB: *So you were in the right place at the right time...*

SRB: Yes, I was. I had self-published a genealogical study of the general's grandfather, who was also my direct ancestor. To make a long story short, I became very interested in the idea of writing another book and told the general's grandson (also named Rufus) I would write the biography. Before long, I had corresponded with two great-grandsons of the general and continued to gather lots of information. I cherished the task. I found out that not only did General Barringer lead a fascinating life, but he knew lots of important figures of the day, contributed significantly to the war effort, and urged the state's leaders and citizens to support Reconstruction. This put him in special company as one of the post war Republicans supporting Reconstruction with others such as James Longstreet, John S. Mosby, and Williams C. Wickham.

SB: *What was difficult about the research and writing processes?*

SRB: Several things. First, I had to learn how to do the research, to dig for primary sources. Second, writing can be difficult for those with an engineering background like myself. I appreciate constructive criticism and it has made for a much better end product.

SB: *How were you able to find previously unpublished sources?*

SRB: I found them a couple of ways. One was through documents family members have collected over the years. Some are in repositories. Some are not. Next, I took many trips to archives in different places: the National Archives, State Archives of North Carolina, Duke University, University of North Carolina's Southern Historical Collection, Canon Memorial Library, Salisbury Public Library, Richmond's Library of Virginia, Virginia Historical Society, and others. I wrote most of the book before the internet offered so much digital material.

SB: *Why do you think it is important to tell the general's story?*

SRB: First, North Carolina's contribution to the war effort has not, in my opinion, received all the attention it deserves. Secondly, General Rufus Barringer was a progressive man in his state and helped awaken North Carolina from its "Rip-Van-Winkle-type" slumber in the mid 1800s. He helped get legislation passed when he served in that body – legislation that provided for the expansion of the railroad system to western North Carolina, thus greatly increasing commerce. He supported other progressive measures, such

as judicial reform, free suffrage, educational improvements, and agricultural enhancements. After the war, he became a Republican, urging support for Reconstruction because he saw it as the fastest way to rejoin the Union and move forward. For this, many saw him as a traitor, but he held steadfast to his principles. He, along with other family members, was an important figure in North Carolina history during the 1800s.

SB: *How did meeting President Lincoln affect Barringer?*

SRB: Meeting President Lincoln after being captured April 3, 1865 had a profound effect on him. He realized Lincoln had been grossly misrepresented in the South. His conversation with the president enlightened him as to the man's genuineness and magnanimity. His meetings with the commandant at City Point, Gen. Charles H. T. Collis and his wife, Fort Delaware commandant Brig. Gen. Albin F. Schoepf, and other northern citizens helped convince Barringer that the Northern people and their leaders were good citizens, and that the people of the South should help heal the nation's wounds by rejoining the Union as soon as practicable.

SB: *How did people respond to Barringer's urging to follow a bolder vision, accept Reconstruction, and work to rejoin the Union?*

SRB: The majority of North Carolinians and Southerners fiercely opposed Reconstruction. These people cast Barringer as a radical and traitor to the South. The state democratic press eviscerated him until he switched parties in 1884. Unpopular with many, he was still elected to serve in the 1875 Constitutional Convention in North Carolina. The Republicans nominated him for the office of lieutenant governor for the 1880 election. He lost the race, but received a solid vote, especially from soldiers and even among citizens of his democratic district.

SB: *How did Barringer try to convince people to accept Reconstruction?*

SRB: He widely addressed the public by writing editorial letters in the newspapers. He cajoled governing party leaders and others over the positive side of accepting Reconstruction – the least harmful and most rapid approach to putting the disasters of the war behind them. He urged abandonment of emerging hostile attitudes, speedily petitioning for re-admittance to the Union by approving the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments to the Constitution. He advocated passage of suffrage for the recently freed African Americans, a position he adopted at the close of the war.

SB: *Why is Barringer often overlooked in writings on the Civil War?*

SRB: North Carolinian soldiers were not written about nearly as much as the fellow Virginians, even though the state furnished more troops than any other state to the Confederate cause. Perhaps this was because the most important actions of the Eastern Theater took place in Virginia. Barringer was a brigadier general given command of the other North Carolina Cavalry Brigade in the spring of 1864, and thus, not as prominent as other North Carolina major generals, such as D. H. Hill (Barringer's brother-in-law) or John B. Gordon.

SB: *Did anything about Barringer's story surprise you?*

SRB: Yes, absolutely. Several things. First, his illicit affair with a light-skinned mulatto woman named Roxanna Coleman, which produced two sons. One son, Warren Clay Coleman, became one of the most influential and wealthy black Americans in the South. I was surprised that this liaison was successfully kept secret for so many years, until just after General Barringer's death in 1895. Secondly, Barringer was so well loved by the soldiers he commanded, and he loved them, too. He was a strict disciplinarian, but still they loved him. Thirdly, discovering the pugnacious side of this persona. Upon meeting General Barringer, people thought he was congenial, scholarly, polite, and well read, which were all true, but just below his surface was a pugnacious side, which was aroused by anyone who attacked his personal code of honor, including his political stances, the honor of his military service, or the honor of North Carolina soldiers.

SB: *Do you have any plans for additional books?*

SRB: Yes, I have authored two additional biographies, both of which are under contract with Savas Beatie. One details the life of Major General Thomas L. Rosser and the other is a biography of Colonel Thomas T. Munford, both of whom were Virginia cavalry commanders. I chose them for several reasons, but primarily because both have an abundance of written material in archives that support real insights as to what made the men do the things they did. Both have substantial war record material available, and both survived the war to lead fascinating post war lives.

SB: *Thank you for talking with us today, Sheridan.*

SRB: You're welcome.

Fighting for Lee: Confederate General Rufus Barringer and the North Carolina Cavalry Brigade will be available from Savas Beatie publications this month.

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