



# GENERAL ORDERS

The Newsletter of the  
**Civil War Round Table of Milwaukee, Inc.**  
**Our 63rd Year**  
and The Iron Brigade Association



DECEMBER 13, 2012

## DALE PHILIPS

### The Red River Campaign

In the early spring of 1864, the new overall commander of the Federal forces, General U.S. Grant, was determined to bring the full weight of all his available resources against the Confederates. General George Meade's Army of the Potomac was to advance on Richmond supported by other Union thrusts up the Shenandoah Valley and James River. General William T. Sherman's forces were to advance from Chattanooga toward Atlanta. This left only the Army of the Gulf under General Nathaniel Banks without a clear objective. Most thought it would be the Confederate port of Mobile but instead the army was ordered to advance up the Red River valley with Shreveport, Louisiana being its primary target. The objectives of the campaign were many. The primary reason was the seizure of masses of cotton needed by northern mills. Another objective was the destruction of the Confederate forces and military support facilities in the upper Red River region. There was also the political objective of trying to return as much of Louisiana to the Union fold before the 1864 election.

In his December presentation to our Round Table, Dale Philips, superintendent of the Lincoln Home National Historic Site in Springfield, Illinois, will discuss the Red River Valley Campaign.

A powerful Union army and naval force was assembled under the command of Banks and Admiral David Dixon Porter. Opposing this force was a much smaller Confederate army under the command of Richard Taylor. In his presentation, Philips will look at the successes and failures of both commanders. He will discuss the route of the Union forces as they advanced from the mouth of the Red River to within 12 miles of Shreveport as well as the mistakes and the results of this very unique campaign.

Special attention will be paid to Alexandria, Louisiana. During the Civil War Alexandria was a major city on the Red River because it was a portage point around a series of huge rapids that, at times of low water, blocked the river. These rapids would also play a key role in the Civil War story. Philips will open his program with the assault on Fort DeRussey and will then follow the route of the advancing Union forces to Alexandria, Natchitoches, and Mansfield. The battlefields of Mansfield, where General Richard Taylor halted his retreat and inflicted a devastating defeat on Federal forces, and Pleasant Hill where the largest battle of the campaign would be waged will be reviewed.

Philips will then cover the Union forces return to Alexandria where they found the Red River too low to get their fleet over the rapids. A look will be taken at the entire retreat route and the battlefields on which General Taylor attempted to block the Union withdrawal and destroy the Army of the Gulf.

Dale Philips is a native of New Jersey. He earned his B.A. degree in American History from York College of Pennsylvania in 1978. He began working for the National Park Service as an interpreter at Gettysburg in 1976. His other duties have included being a law enforcement ranger for the Army Corps of Engineers at Lake Shelbyville, Illinois, an interpretive ranger at Fort Sumter, Charleston, South Carolina, supervisory park ranger/historian at Chickamauga/Chattanooga National Military Park, unit manager of the Chalmette (Battle of New Orleans site) Unit of Jean Lafitte National Historical Park, unit manager of the Acadian Unit of Jean Lafitte, and superintendent of the George Rogers Clark National Historical Park.

Philips has written numerous articles on U.S. military history for various publications. He also works as a guide/lecturer for the Delta Queen Steamboat Company, Civil War Round Tables, and other history touring organizations. Dale is married to the former Carol Patton Bernstein of Shreveport. The couple has one daughter, Laura, who attends college in Phoenix, Arizona.

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##### DECEMBER MEETING AT A GLANCE

Dale Philips  
"The Red River Campaign"

##### Country Club of the Wisconsin Club

6200 W. Good Hope Rd., Milwaukee.

See map on page 9.

(Jackets required for dining room)

5:30 p.m. – Staff Meeting

(Open to all members)

6:15 p.m. – Registration & Social Hour

6:45 p.m. – Dinner

7:30 p.m. – Program

Dinner – **\$25 by reservation.**

Deadline: Monday, December 10, 2012

See page 7.

Speaker and topic are subject to change.

In case of inclement weather, listen to  
WTMJ or WISN radio.

**www.civilwarwi.org**

## CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE NEWS

### 2012-2013 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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### CWRT ANNUAL FUND

The following members have shown their generous commitment by making an investment in the CWRT Annual Fund. This list reflects donations received through November 23, 2012.

#### **Major Contributor (\$500 and above)**

In Memoriam: Eugene and Caroline Jamrozy  
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## ANNOUNCEMENTS • EVENTS • MEETINGS

### November 12 – December 10, 2012

Abraham Lincoln: A Man Of His Time, A Man For All Times Exhibit  
Central Library, 814 W. Wisconsin Ave.

### December 8, 2012

Victorian Christmas, 11 – 4 p.m.  
Kenosha Civil War Museum

### December 8, 2012

Theatre Program, 1 p.m.  
"Cordelia Harvey: Wisconsin Angel"  
Kenosha Civil War Museum

### December 9, 2012

A Christmas Carol, 1 – 3 p.m.  
Kenosha Civil War Museum

### December 13, 2012

Waukesha Civil War Round Table, 7 p.m.  
Citizens Bank of Mukwonago – Waukesha Branch  
Speaker: Lance Herdegen

### December 15, 2012

Wreaths Across America, 11 a.m.  
Woods National Cemetery  
Soldiers and Sailors Monument

### December 15, 2012

150th Anniversary Reception of the West Side Soldiers Aid Society  
Immediately following Wreaths Across America Ceremony  
Wadsworth Library (Building 3) VA Historic District

### December 18, 2012

Prairieville Irregulars Round Table, 7 p.m.  
Boardroom, Campus Center Building, Carroll University  
Speaker: Lance Herdegen

### January 5, 2012

Fancy Dress Ball for Twelfth Night 1863, 6:30 p.m.  
Wauwatosa Woman's Club  
Tickets: info@wssas.org or (414) 427-3776  
www.wssas.org

## MILWAUKEE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE QUARTERMASTER'S REGALIA

What better way to show off your pride in our organization! All items are made of first-rate, quality materials, modestly embroidered with the Round Table/Iron Brigade logo, along with your name or initials.

ITEM	COST
Hooded Sweatshirt in Northern Blue.....	\$35.00
Baseball Cap .....	\$10.00
Blue Brief Case .....	\$25.00
Blue Light-Weight Sweatshirt.....	\$30.00
Blue Izod Polo Shirt.....	\$40.00
Blue Dress Shirt .....	\$40.00
Blue Fleece-Lined Jacket.....	\$60.00
Iron Brigade Pin.....	\$5.00
CWRT Pin.....	\$5.00
Bugle Pin.....	\$5.00
Iron Brigade Medal .....	\$25.00
Red River Medal.....	\$25.00
CWRT 60 Year Medal.....	\$10.00

Mail: Roman Blenski, Quartermaster  
4601 W. Holt Ave.  
Milwaukee, WI 53219  
Call: 414-327-2847  
Email: dbcpmilw@execpc.com  
In Person: Monthly Meeting at Book Raffle

## KENOSHA CIVIL WAR MUSEUM

**December 8, 2012, 1 p. m.**

*Cordelia Harvey: Wisconsin Angel*

Cordelia Harvey, First Lady of Wisconsin during part of the Civil War, will be portrayed by Mary Kababik. The show is taken, for the most part, from Cordelia's own words. A witness to history, Cordelia gives us a very personal impression of Abraham Lincoln, with whom she meets in order to try to convince him to build hospitals in Wisconsin. Join Mary for this free theatre presentation.



**December 8, 2012, 11- 4 p.m.**

*Victorian Christmas*

Join the Civil War Museum as they explore the traditions and activities involved in the Victorian Era celebration of the Christmas Season.

- Dance Demonstrations by the West Side Victorian Dancers
- Christmas Carols by the Lance Middle School Choir
- Victorian Fashion and Traditions Display by the Historical Timekeepers
- Visit the Winter Camp of a Civil War Soldier provided by Living Historian Steve Acker
- "Lincoln's Official Holidays" Program presented by Civil War Museum Curator Doug Dammann
- Family Crafts

**December 9, 2012, 1 -3 p.m.**

*A Christmas Carol*

Presented by RG Productions

and Southeast Wisconsin Performing Arts

Celebrate the bicentennial of Charles Dickens birth. Radio theatre, Victorian carolers and holiday treats help set the stage for this timeless classic. Free Family Performance. Non-perishable donations will be accepted for the local food pantry.

### Second Friday Lunchbox Lecture Series

**December 14, 2012, Noon**

*Investigating the Battlefields* presented by Michael Kutzer

When the panorama business boom ended 20 years after the Civil War, painters had to make careful investigations of the battlegrounds to create the most truthful depiction. What did they find there and how authentic were the "biggest paintings the world had every seen?"

## Old Mickey returns to tell a story or two

Sgt. James Patrick Sullivan made an appearance at Freedom Hall in the Civil War Museum at Kenosha, Wis., a few days back and it was the same old "Mickey, of Company K"—sharp of tongue, a glint in his eye, and full of Irish blarney.

It was good to see the old veteran of the Sixth Wisconsin and listen as he talked about attending the 1883 reunion of the Iron Brigade Association at La Crosse.

Mickey was to give a talk, he explained, and was trying to catch a few words on paper. He is the first enlisted man asked to formally address the annual gathering, and he admitted looking back to his soldier days triggered a flood of memories.

Sullivan laughed in telling how his new company—the Lemonweir Minute Men—drilled at the Mauston Park in Juneau County before the call to go to Camp Randall at Madison in 1861. School children, fathers, mothers, sisters, friends and girls that had not yet been left behind stood watching, he recalled with a smile, and "if they judge by the loudness of the tones of command and our ability to charge the school house or church, they must have felt the rebellion would soon be a thing of the past."

A couple of darker memories gave Mickey pause. It was at Gettysburg, in the bloody railroad cut, that he was shot in the shoulder and taken to the town on the back of a cavalry horse ordered up by Gen. James Wadsworth himself. At the Court House where he found doctors "busy cutting up and patching up the biggest part of the Sixth Regiment, a good number of the Company K boys were in the same fix I was, and some a great deal worse."

And there were other memories as well—of "Old Boo" the famous pet jackass of Company K, and a drill session with two new recruits, one German and one Irish, and, of course, Sullivan had to pull from an old chest his faded blue coat and the misshapen famous Black Hat of the Iron Brigade. The old coat was a little tight around the middle and the hat had seen better days, he admitted as he put them on, and then pulled himself up erect soldier fashion to begin his poem:

There are hats in the closets, old, ugly to view,  
Of very slight value they may be to you.  
But the wreath of the Astors should not buy them to-day,  
With letters of honor, old Company K.

At the end, Sullivan saluted the way the boys did in 1861, and then he was gone.

His return was a funded by a grant given to the Civil War Museum from the Wisconsin Humanities Council. The 40-minute performance featured actor T. Stacy Hicks as Mickey Sullivan. The script was written by playwright Jim Farris from Sullivan's Civil War writings as found in *An Irishman in the Iron Brigade: The Civil War Memoirs of James P. Sullivan, Sergt., Company K, 6th Wisconsin Volunteers*, by William J.K. Beaudot and Lance J. Herdegen.



"Like" the Civil War Museum on facebook! <http://www.facebook.com/CWMKenosha>



**From the 29th Regiment  
Friars Point Mississippi  
January 2, 1863**

To all at Home:

Happy New Year to all. I don't know as it makes any particular difference if one day of the New Year has gone. I mean the whole year when I wish a happy New Year to you. A year has opened to me with very different prospects from any I have ever seen and from any I ever expect to see, but here I am it may be for three years and it may be for six months. Although things look dark now, Burnside's defeat at Fredericksburg, Grant's retreat in this state north of us and other defeats we have had, tend to make our prospects darker than they were before, yet I hope that this war will terminate before three years and terminate too as we want it to. I sometimes lose faith in all our officers when I see some of the stealing that our officers are doing. One of our Capts., the Capt. Of Co. K, a few nights ago went out privately with his company to one of the plantations nearby and stole two loads of cotton and sold them to a Capt. in one of the boats on the river. As a national consequence the planter when he saw that the cotton was stolen from him by one of the officers he marched down to the picket line and fired at our pickets. The next morning Wm was ordered to take a squad of men and burn all the buildings and the plantation. Just as they were burning the last building the Col. heard the circumstances and he had Capt. Delimatin arrested. He is now under arrest and I hope that he will suffer. I tell you what I know about this cotton speculation. I know that salt, calico and cotton cloth, the very thing this South must need was sold to them at outrageous prices and in return took cotton at 50 cents per pound and then I know it is sold at Cairo for 52 and 55 cents. Now when is this leak? The cotton is certainly sold at Cairo again and somebody's pockets the profit. There is no one of the officers that pretends to deny but that almost all the officers are speculating in cotton in this Department of the Army.

My New Years dinner consisted of hard crackers and honey. Wasn't that pretty good? We went out on a foraging expedition yesterday and some of the boys found a hive of honey and I had some. At any rate it made me some sick but not as sick as some of the other boys. In less than one hour from the time we found the honey there was some sick boys. You can guess how they were taken. I am sitting in my tent with Henry Calkins, O.R. Chapman and Al Herrick all around me all talking as fast as they can and each one giving my board an occasional joggle to complete some of the flourishes.

Tomorrow we move again. As usual our destination is unknown. It may be we are going back to Helena, it may be to Vicksburg and it may be we are to go to Memphis to reinforce Grant. At any rate it makes no difference to me where we do go. We are stationed at one of the worst places in the South. At this place the negroes say that men were headed up in barrels and then rolled into the river and that men have been tied in a large Post Office that is here and when convicted of being Union men they were either hung or rolled into the river. I have heard the negroes say this and when just such stories are circulated through the North about this time I can't help but believe them. Fifty miles from here the army had 250 negroes under the command of a Capt. blockading a road. One morning the Capt. called the roll and 84 answered to their names the rest having skedaddled to parts unknown. The negro that we now have cooking for us was one of that number and told me this story. We have got a tip top negro cooking for us now. He learned himself to read and he asked me today to

learn him to write and I shall do so.

Well I must bring this long letter to a close. You can't complain of short letters from me can you? I will write to Henry this week and will also write a letter to Cora as soon as we are settled which will be day after tomorrow probably. Write every one of you in your next. I don't wait for letters from home before I write for I write four letters when I receive one but write as often as you can and that will suit me.

Remember me as the same, John J. Barney (Co. I, 29th Wisconsin)

**December 1862**

Dec. 1st, late in the afternoon we fall back through the Wilderness, recross the Rapidan at midnight near Germania Mills. Distance seven.

Dec. 2nd are detailed to guard Mitchells' Ford and commence to build winter quarters.

Dec. 5th, quite a heavy snowstorm.

Dec. 9th, break camp, march about three miles southward across the railroad – Potomac Creek. The whole army is on the move.

Dec. 10th, change position to the left.

Dec. 11th, march to near Fitzhugh Crossing two miles.

From Cornelius Wheeler's diaries

**LATE FROM THE IRON BRIGADE**

Its situation on the Eve of Battle – Opining of the Bombardment of Fredericksburg – Plans of crossing – the Paymaster visits the Wisconsin Men – they send Home four months wages – “A touch of Nature makes all Kin.” (we are gratified to be able to give our readers in the following letter some recent intelligence from our brave boys on the Rappahannock. The money which they are sending home will give much needed relief to many a family.)

**On the Bluff Opposite Fredericksburg, 10 o'clock a.m.  
December 11th**

After several days of cold weather which has given us good roads in places of impassable mud, we have a softening, hushed, hazy day as if winter were yielding to spring.

Last night we of Meredith's (formerly Gibbon's) brigade bivouacked in the serene moon light two or three miles from Fredericksburg. The anticipation of a great day confirmed by the orders from commanding generals and by the continual sound of pontoon trains and artillery moving to the front made us watchful. We took our coffee at 4 o'clock by the light of the camp fires and awaited the order to march.

Just as the day was announced by a few faint penciling of light in the east, the booming cannon in the fortifications – which were building along the river when I visited the locality last week, made it known that the day's work had commenced. The firing has been heavy and incessant. All the morning the bluffs reverberating the sounds, but now it slackens.

Our brigade lies a little back from the bluff waiting until the preparations for crossing can be completed. I am told that the attempt is making to throw across two bridges for each of the grand divisions ; the points

*continued on page 5*

*FROM THE FIELD...continued from page 4.*

selected for the purpose being at Fredericksburg, a few miles below and a little distance above. The town is now on fire in three or four places in punishment for a destructive fire from concealed rebels, which was very fatal to a company of engineers who had nearly completed a bridge at that place.

Aqua Creek, Va.

#### **Friday Morning, 12th**

It is reported that Gen. Smith crossed last night on the lower bridge which was successfully laid under the projection of a gunboat.

The long expected paymaster arrived just as we are about to move with something like \$250,000 for our brigade and as the men do not like to go into battle with any considerable sum of money, I have been detailed to go to Washington and send to their friend what they can spare of their four months wages.

On the eve of battle a soldier will sometimes put his pocket book into the hands of the Chaplain with a word and a tear of a manner which expresses more than both. At such a moment hearts touch that had hardly recognized their kindred humanity before. Refinement does not separate itself from rudeness, even the pious and the profane have some heart throbs which are similar. In the immediate presence of a great common danger a man is simply and only a man except as trust in the Mighty One makes him greater; and it is found and felt that the most unworthy have something of their humanity left to which possibly the good may yet make its appeal not in vain.

#### **Fredericksburg – December 12 – 15, 1862**

At Fredericksburg, in order to have the regiments of the brigade in the same uniform, I had ordered all to be equipped with the regulation black felt hats. In the battle of Gainesville, the men we took prisoners asked who "Those black hatted fellows were" they had been fighting and after that the men were accustomed to refer to themselves as "The Black Hat Brigade." How or where the name "Iron Brigade" was first given I do not know but soon after the battle of Antietam the name was started and ever after was applied to the brigade.

John Gibbons

#### **FROM THE SEVENTH REGIMENT Camp Opposite Fredericksburg, V. December 17, 1862**

Since I last wrote to you the Seventh has passed through another battle, and I will give the reader a short history of the battle, from the time we crossed the Rappahannock till we re-crossed it, and also of the enemy's fortifications as seen from our position.

We crossed the river at 3 o'clock p.m. on the 12th, Friday, and camped for the night. The rebels gave us a slight welcome by sending a few shells while we were massed, some of which struck in our brigade with out doing injury. In the evening General Burnside rode along the lines and was cheered vociferously as he passed, all seeming to have great confidence in their commander.

The 13th at 7 o'clock A.M. we were ordered to the front, on the left flank, which General Doubleday was ordered to hold his division being the left of the line and our brigade – that is Meredith's – the extreme left. About 10 o'clock A.M. we were ordered to advance our line so as to gain position of a piece of woods which the rebels then held; our skirmishers were thrown out and Battery B, 4th U.S. Artillery (of which Alonzo Priest is an efficient member) was got into position and commenced shelling the woods; the rebels soon left, removing all their killed and wounded. They had one piece of artillery disabled which they took off the field. We took five horses and some prisoners.

General DOUBLEDAY'S division advanced about one and a half miles during the day, under a heavy fire of artillery. In the afternoon the firing on both sides came to a lull, but about sunset it was again opened on the extreme right of the rebels on our left flank, the firing being principally by artillery and sharpshooters. The artillery fire was mostly directed to the infantry in support of the artillery. Our loss in the Seventh was one killed and three wounded. The Twenty-fourth Michigan of our brigade suffered most; their loss was seven killed and sixteen wounded. They are a new regiment, but done credit to themselves and the state from whence they hail.

The following night our Regiment was detailed for picket duty. An occasional shot from the sharpshooters and now and then a charge of canister from the rebels caused us much annoyance during the night. On Sunday all was silent the most of the day, except picket firing in front, all keeping line of battle formed ready to advance when ordered. On the 14th, Companies G and H were thrown out as skirmishers, at 9 o'clock A.M.; the rest of the regiment remained in the line of battle. At night we were relieved by the Nineteenth Indiana, and fell back to our line of battle in front of the left flank being our former position, and were again ordered to sleep on our arms. – Just as many were closing their eyes for a little rest when lo! the order came to pack up as quietly as possible. Then commenced one of the greatest military feats of good Generalship ever undertook – that of re-crossing a large river with a great army and a hostile foe in front capable of annihilating the army owing to their superior position. Never did I witness the hand of Providence more fully exhibited to the children of men; the god of battles led us over safe and dry shod...

About 3 o'clock on the morning of the 16th we moved our camp one mile and since then have moved four times and every time designed to go into winter quarters. I think winter quarters will not be our portion at least I hope not. We are now camped this 25th day of December one mile from Potomac Creek and near Bell's Plain.

Your readers will please excuse this hasty sketch, as I now write while on picket post. I close by wishing you all a "Merry Christmas," and "A Happy New Year!"

Yours,

Stephen Durkee



In December 1947, Frank Vandiver's topic was "Josiah Gorgas."

J. P. Renald spoke about "Captain Wirz and Andersonville Prison" at the December 1953 meeting.

In December 1962, James I. Robertson visited our group. The subject that evening was "The Last War Between Gentlemen."

Stanley H. Swift spoke about "Lincoln and the Theatre" at the December 1973 meeting of the Round Table.

In December 1981, John Patrick Hunter was our speaker. The topic at that meeting was "The Rambunctious Reporters of the Civil War."

Ed Pierce was the featured speaker at the December 1995 meeting speaking about "Faith, Family and Flag."

In December 2004, Dr. David Zarefsky spoke to our group. The presentation that evening was on "Lincoln, Douglas, and Slavery: In the Crucible of Public Debate."

# AND SO IT CONTINUES December 1862...

## Marking the Civil War Sesquicentennial

December would find the citizens of Richmond, Vicksburg and Mobile lacking many of the commodities they had taken for granted just a year ago. Clothing was getting to be in short supply. Cooking fuel was increasingly expensive and in many instances, too expensive to spare for heating a parlor. The cost of meat continued to rise as did the price of cornmeal, butter and flour. As a result, the value of Confederate currency declined. In the North, food was still plentiful, as were clothing and other necessities.

On the war front, Bragg was at Murfreesboro, Tennessee. Grant was near Holly Springs working on his plans for Vicksburg. Burnside and Lee faced each other in Fredericksburg where a costly battle was building.

**December 1, 1862** • The third session of the Thirty-seventh Congress of the United States convened and received the State of the Union message from Lincoln:

*The dogmas of the quiet past, are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise – with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew, and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves, and then we shall save our country. Fellow-citizens, we cannot escape history. We of this Congress and this administration, will be remembered in spite of ourselves. No personal significance, or insignificance, can spare one or another of us. The fiery trial through which we pass, will light us down, in honor or dishonor; to the latest generation. We say we are the Union. The world will not forget that we say this. We know how to save the Union. The world knows we do know how to save it. We – even we here – hold the power, and bear the responsibility. In giving freedom to the slave, we assure freedom to the free – honorable alike in what we give, and what we preserve. We shall nobly save, or meanly lose, the last best hope of earth. Other means may succeed; this could not fail. The way is plain, peaceful, generous, just – a way which, if followed, the world will forever applaud, and God must forever bless.*

After their march from the Shenandoah Valley, Jackson's troops were moving into position to form the right of Lee's army at Fredericksburg.

**December 2, 1862** • Civilians were evacuating Fredericksburg as quickly as they could. Many sent their slaves south to prevent them from escaping to the Federal lines or from being freed by the Federals.

**December 4, 1862** • Confederate General Joseph E. Johnston assumes overall command in the West.

**December 6, 1862** • Lincoln orders the execution by hanging of 39 Indians convicted in participating in the Sioux uprising in Minnesota with the hanging date set for December 19.

**December 7, 1862** • About twelve miles from Fayetteville, Arkansas, General Thomas C. Hindman's Confederates attacked the combined Union forces of Generals James Blunt and Francis J. Herron in the Battle of Prairie Grove. Hindman's goal was to attack the Union forces separately but they managed to join after a march by Herron's men from Wilson's Creek. The Confederates held their position but bitter winter weather finally forced them to withdraw during the night which allowed the Federals to maintain control of northwest Arkansas.

**December 8, 1862** • President Davis would write to Lee at Fredericksburg, "In Tennessee and Mississippi the disparity between our armies and those of the enemy is so great as to fill me with apprehension."

**December 10, 1862** • The U.S. House of Representatives passed a bill creating the new state of West Virginia. Burnside increased his activities at Falmouth – an attack on Fredericksburg was imminent.

Colonel Samuel Zook, Brigadier Commander, II Corps wrote to a friend predicting the upcoming disaster:

*Tomorrow we commence the crossing of the Rappahannock and will be sure to have a fearful fight – In fact I expect we will be licked, for we have allowed the rebs nearly four weeks to erect batteries &c. to slaughter us by thousands in consequence of the infernal inefficiency of the Quarter Master Genl & his subordinates. If we had had the pontoons promised when we arrived here we could have the hills on the other side of the river without costing over 50 men – Now it will cost at least ten thousand if not more.*

*I expect to be sacrificed tomorrow...If tomorrow night finds me dead remember me kindly as a soldier who meant to do his whole duty.*

Robert E. Lee would take time to write a letter to his son, Fitzhugh's wife, Charlotte, expressing his grief over the death of their second child:

*I heard yesterday with the deepest sorrow, of the death of your infant. I was so grateful at her birth. I felt that she would be such a comfort to you, such a pleasure to my dear Fitzhugh, and would fill so full the void still aching in your hearts. But you have now two sweet angels in heaven. What joy there is in the thought! I can say nothing to soften the anguish you must feel, and I know you are assured of my deep and affectionate sympathy. May God give you strength to bear the affliction He has imposed, and produce future joy out of your present misery, is my earnest prayer...*

**December 11, 1862** • It was a foggy morning as Burnside's engineers began building pontoon bridges across the Rappahannock River. Confederate sharpshooters, posted along the riverfront by Brigadier General William Barksdale, would drive the builders away time after time. Union artillery shelled the city without effect. Northern infantry in pontoons would ultimately ferry across the river under fire to establish a bridgehead and force the Southerners away. In spite of this, Barksdale's Mississippians would persist in their fighting amid the houses and in the streets. Barksdale would delay Burnside's army for almost twelve hours and would wreck Burnside's plan. Lee, divining Burnside's intent, concentrated his army on the hills outside Fredericksburg.

**December 12, 1862** • Burnside's men crossed the built bridge and headed for the heights above the town. Burnside, examining Lee's entrenched defenses, determined that he could not attack Lee's center without getting caught in a crossfire. He decided that he would strike the lines that jutted forward forming two salients. The main attack would be south of Fredericksburg against Lieutenant General "Stonewall" Jackson's Second Corps at Prospect Hill. The secondary strike would be against Lieutenant General Longstreet's forces at Marye's Heights and the stone-lined Sunken Road.

**December 13, 1862** • The Union and Confederate armies clashed on the field south of Fredericksburg. Ambiguous orders and confusion would cause delays. Burnside had hoped to attack the Confederate right and divide Lee's army but there was little understanding about the details and timing. Uncertain of Burnside's intent, Major General William B. Franklin on the left committed a bare minimum of troops. Meade would launch the main attack, undermanned, with John Gibbon's division in support.

Union artillery unlimbered in a muddy field soon to be known as the Slaughter Pen. Meade's attack was weakly supported and his men along with Gibbon's division were repulsed by a furious Confederate counterattack. The fighting was furious at the Slaughter Pen. Franklin, commanding the Left Grand Division, was slow in moving more men into the fight.





Fredericksburg, Virginia. "Marye's house where the Irish Legion fell, December [13], 1862.  
Photograph by James Gardner. Library of Congress LC-B815-733.

On the right, Burnside ordered brigades from Sumner's Right Grand Division to move out of Fredericksburg and assault the Confederate lines. Georgians and North Carolinians were stationed behind a four-foot high stone wall along a sunken road at the base of Marye's Heights. As they approached the wall, the Federals would run into what was described as a sheet of flame as the Rebel infantry rose and fired. Successive attacks would leave regiments and entire brigades shattered.

John Gibbon was severely wounded in the wrist by a bursting shell during the battle, making him the highest ranking U.S. officer injured in the battle.

**December 14, 1862** • Burnside, angered over his failure, ordered a renewed attack but was persuaded by his officers not to attempt it. Lee would be criticized for not mounting a counterattack. Longstreet would look upon the killing field in front of his line and would write:

*The dead were piled sometimes three deep, and when morning broke, the spectacle we saw upon the battlefield was one of the most distressing I ever witnessed. The charges had been desperate and bloody, but utterly hopeless.*

Lee would famously say to his officers:

*It is well that war is so terrible, otherwise, we should become too fond of it!*

Lincoln was reported to be despondent over the tragedy of Fredericksburg. After receiving an account of the terrible carnage from an eye witness he said, *If there is a worse place than hell, I am in it.*

An estimated 114,000 men were engaged at Fredericksburg. Federal casualties would total approximately 12,653 killed, wounded, captured or missing. Confederate casualties would total approximately 5,377 killed, wounded, captured or missing.

**December 15, 1862** • The Army of the Potomac completes its withdrawal across the Rappahannock with everyone questioning Burnside's decisions. Hooker would be among the most vocal critics.

In the west, Nathan Bedford Forrest and his men would cross the Tennessee River near Clifton to raid the communications around Vicksburg.

**December 16, 1862** • At New Orleans Major General Nathaniel P. Banks assumed command of the Federal Department of the Gulf, replacing Benjamin Butler.

The Army of the Potomac, disheartened, was at Falmouth and Stafford Heights near Fredericksburg where they would winter.

**December 17, 1862** • General Grant at Holly Springs would issue his controversial General Order No. 11 stating:

*The Jews, as a class violating every regulation of trade established by the Treasury Department and also department orders, are hereby expelled from the department within twenty-four hours from the receipt of this order.*

Halleck and Lincoln would rescind the order on January 4, 1863, but the damage to Grant was done.

In Washington, Secretary of State, William H. Seward offered to resign from the Cabinet. The resignation was declined by Lincoln.

**December 18, 1862** • Lincoln received a committee of nine Republican senators and discussed the reconstruction of the Federal Cabinet and the submitted resignation of Seward.

Grant announced the organization of his army. William T. Sherman, Stephen Hurlbut, James B. McPherson and John A. McClernand were to be corps commanders.

*Continued on page 8.*

Jefferson Davis, visiting Chattanooga, wrote Secretary of War Seddon that Bragg's troops at Murfreesboro were in good shape and ready for the coming campaign.

**December 19, 1862** • Lincoln would spend the day dealing with the Cabinet crisis.

Forrest struck the railroads near Jackson, Tennessee, causing delays in Grant's supply lines.

**December 20, 1862** • The Cabinet crisis comes to an end when Salmon Chase offered his resignation and to his great surprise, Lincoln accepted it – on paper. Lincoln finally ended the dispute refusing to accept any of the resignations and asking Seward and Chase to resume their duties.

Confederate Earl Van Dorn's forces raided the Holly Springs depot capturing at least 1500 Federals and destroying over a million and a half dollars worth of military supplies.

**December 21, 1862** • The U.S. Congress authorized the Medal of Honor to be awarded to such Navy personnel as distinguished themselves by their gallantry in action.

**December 22, 1862** • President Lincoln, in Washington, met with Burnside. He would issue an order congratulating the army for its bravery at Fredericksburg and would call the defeat an "accident."

**December 23, 1862** • Davis, from Jackson, Mississippi, wired his Secretary of War, "There is immediate and urgent necessity for heavy guns and long range field pieces at Vicksburg."

**December 25, 1862** • President and Mrs. Lincoln would spend the day visiting wounded soldiers in Washington hospitals.

**December 26, 1862** • Sherman's forces were advancing toward the line of bluffs known as Walnut Hills and Haynes' Bluff, protecting Vicksburg on the north. Rosecrans' Federal forces moved out of Nashville and towards Bragg's army at Murfreesboro.

**December 27, 1862** • Sherman's troops continue to move north of Vicksburg towards the bluffs. Rosecrans' army continued its march towards Murfreesboro.

**December 29, 1862** • Sherman's troops fought the Battle of Chickasaw Bayou to gain the bluffs on the north side of Vicksburg. A relatively small portion of Pemberton's army easily held off the Federals.

**December 30, 1862** • Rosecrans approached the main Confederate force at Murfreesboro.

In Washington, Lincoln produced a preliminary draft of the final Emancipation Proclamation to his Cabinet.

**December 31, 1862** • The long month of December would not end quietly. At Murfreesboro, immediately after dawn, Hardee's reinforced Southern corps opened strongly on the Federal right in a wheeling motion. The Federals would be on the defensive from the start. After several assaults, the Federals were forced back to the Murfreesboro-Nashville Pike and were ultimately pinned against Stone's River. The Confederates would make several assaults against the line until late afternoon. The Confederates would win the day but at a heavy cost. Bragg's casualties were in excess of 9000. Both armies rested as night fell on the battlefield.

In Washington, Lincoln met with his Cabinet to make final adjustments to the Emancipation Proclamation. Lincoln also approved an act admitting West Virginia into the Union as the thirty-fifth state. From Mobile, Jefferson Davis would wire his Secretary of War, "Guns and ammunition most effective against iron clads needed at Vicksburg and Port Hudson. Very much depends upon prompt supply."

And so it continues.

## HOLIDAYS FOR SOLDIERS 1861 & 1862

### CHRISTMAS FIXINGS FROM CAMP WASHBURN

The ladies of Milwaukee propose to give our brave soldier boys a taste of Christmas cheer on Wednesday next and surely they deserve to be remembered at that "feast of fat things." For this purpose the ladies of the city are requested to send a "ration" or two of their cold meat and cakes and pie(s) or things to Camp Washburn or to Mrs. Kilbourn corner of Fourth and Spring Streets, before ten o'clock Christmas morning, who will see them sent to camp.

*Milwaukee Sentinel*, December 23, 1861

### THE WOUNDED SOLDIERS' CHRISTMAS DINNER.

Nowhere else in the world than in America could have been seen the sight which has made this holiday in Washington remarkable and memorable – the banqueting of 35,000 wounded and sick soldiers upon a Christmas dinner, spread by the hands of individual benevolence.

The tables were set and abundantly and elegantly covered in the largest wards of the different hospitals. The rooms were ornamented by volunteer hands with evergreens and flowers. Volunteer waiters, gentlemen and ladies of the first families in the land, tenderly and devotedly served the wounded warriors in every hospital, waiting first on those too much injured to be moved to the table. The feasting of this army of wounded thus honored and cared for was a touching site. To make the festive occasion complete in most of the hospitals, hired or volunteer singers sang songs of home and of country; in others, members of Congress and Cabinet officers made speeches happily fit to the occasion, and moved socially among the tables.

In one or two the President found time to bring excitement and sunshine with him among the bandaged and becrutched revelers. Over seven thousand turkeys and chickens were consumed at this novel Christmas dinner.

This immense amount of poultry came mostly from Maryland and Pennsylvania, but four car-loads of it came all the way from Chicago. Three hundred turkeys, sent from a very-generous Albany, came cooked and ready for the table.

December 31, 1862

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## WEST SIDE SOLDIERS AID SOCIETY CELEBRATES ITS SESQUICENTENNIAL

In late November 1862, a group of prominent young women connected with the Ladies' Association for the Aid of Military Hospitals began to organize its own relief agency in Milwaukee's Fourth Ward. The first mention of their efforts appeared on December 9, 1862, in the *Semi-Weekly Wisconsin*. The list of donations in that article included an acknowledgment of everything they would need to begin their work for Union soldiers as well as a lengthy list of donors. Some of the larger cash donations came from the Intermediate Department of the Fourth Ward School, Spring Street Congregational Church, Charles Bigelow, J.J. Flint, and Mrs. Alexander Mitchell. The West Side Soldiers Aid Society distinguished itself by an independent spirit, innovative fundraisers, and pioneering efforts in post-War care for Union soldiers.

The modern-day West Side Soldiers Aid Society will remember the remarkable women of 1862 at two events this month. On December 8, they will host a reception at the Kenosha Civil War Museum, and on December 15 — the actual date of the society's incorporation — they will welcome guests to a reception at the VA's Wadsworth Library following Wreaths Across America.

Today's Society supports the patient libraries and archives at the Zablocki VA Medical Center, projects for the new Spinal Cord Injury Center, and other veteran and soldier relief efforts.



## THE CANAL-BOAT BRIDGE

### A Rare Sketch by an Iron Brigade Soldier, and the Editorial Bombardment That Transformed It

In the late fall of 1862, as the opposing armies converged on Fredericksburg, editors in distant offices scrambled for background material on the town. The staff of *Harper's Weekly* dug into a small, unused archive of eyewitness sketches made during the previous spring and summer, and from those created a montage that appeared in the issue of December 6, 1862, five days prior to the first Battle of Fredericksburg.

While researching a blog post on Fredericksburg's Upper Pontoon Crossing, I learned of the spring/summer origins of the December 6 montage, and that most of its component woodcuts were based on (presumably lost) sketches by Henry Didiot, a soldier in the Sixth Wisconsin Infantry of the famed Iron Brigade. Not long after his sketching at Fredericksburg, Didiot fell at the Battle of Brawner's Farm on August 28, 1862.

The woodcut montage of his sketches published posthumously on December 6 included a fairly nondescript picture of a Fredericksburg locale destined to assume considerable fame as the Middle Pontoon Crossing during the ensuing battle. The view looks east across the Rappahannock

River where it widens into Fredericksburg's small harbor, and from the town wharves towards Ferry Farm and its namesake ferry landing in Stafford County. (The Ferry Farm buildings at center-right horizon post-dated and occupied the general area of the site of George Washington's boyhood home, which was itself in ruins by the 1830s.)

Yet until last night, when I spotted the sketch on the website of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, I was unaware that any of Didiot's original drawings had survived. Equally important, the sketch offers a contrast that shows how *Harper's* editors had subjected it to a fairly severe artistic bombardment when creating the woodcut version. Although unattributed on the website, the sketch's original caption – "Canal Boat Bridge across the Rappahannock," Built by Co I 6th Reg. Wis. Vol. in one day... Sketched by Henry (illegible)... – and basic design connect it to Didiot and, in turn, to the woodcut published by *Harper's*, the editors' drastic alterations notwithstanding.

*As posted on Mysteries and Conundrums*

## December Meeting

Our December meeting will be held at the **Country Club of the Wisconsin Club**, formerly the Brynwood Country Club, located at 6200 W. Good Hope Rd., Milwaukee WI 53223 (414) 353-8800.

Valet Parking is highly recommended.

**THE COUNTRY CLUB OF  
THE WISCONSIN CLUB**



## Civil War Round Table Dinner Reservation for December 13, 2012

Mail your reservations by Monday, December 10, 2012, to: ALSO, call in reservations to:

Paul Eilbes

(262) 376-0568

1809 Washington Ave.

Cedarburg, WI 53012-9730

Enclosed is \$ \_\_\_\_ (meal price \$25.00 per person) for \_\_\_\_ reservations for December 13, 2012, meeting of the Civil War Round Table of Milwaukee. (Please make checks payable to the Civil War Round Table of Milwaukee, Inc.)

Name of Member \_\_\_\_\_

*General Orders*, the official publication of the Civil War Round Table of Milwaukee, Inc., is produced September through June and upon request of the Board of Directors.

Send submissions to **Donna Agnelly, Editor**, 420 Racine St., Unit 110, Waterford, WI 53185 or email to **dagnelly@tds.net** with "Civil War Round Table" in the subject line of your message. All submissions must be received by the Editor no later than the 10th of the month prior to the next issue. The Editor reserves the right to select articles and to edit submissions for style and length.

All address changes or problems receiving your *General Orders* should be directed through Membership Chairman Paul Eilbes.

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The Civil War Round Table of Milwaukee, Inc., admits members of any race, color, national or ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges and activities of the Round Table.

## 2012 – 2013 SPEAKER SCHEDULE

### January 10, 2013

Dave Powell  
Confederate Cavalry at Chickamauga

### February 7, 2013

Dr. Mary Ambroe  
Lt. Col. Charles Grosvenor, 18th Ohio Inf. Rgt.

### March 7, 2013

Lance Herdegen  
The Iron Brigade in Civil War and Memory

### April 11, 2013

John Fitzpatrick  
Lincoln at Gettysburg

### May 9, 2013

Ethan Rafuse  
Lee and Gettysburg

### June 13, 2013 (at the Country Club)

Timothy B. Smith  
Battle of Corinth