

# The Outpost

The Newsletter of the Salt Creek Civil War Roundtable  
Vol. XLV No. 5 January 2008



## 407th Regular Meeting

DATE: 4<sup>th</sup> January 2008

PLACE: Fairview Village, 200 Village Dr., Downers Grove, Il.

TIME: 8:00 PM

SPEAKER: Robert Girardi

TOPIC: "General Impressions of the Civil War"

We all know what the historians have had to say about the various men fortunate enough to attain the rank of general in the Civil War. It has not always been very complimentary. Well, ladies and gentlemen, it ain't nothing compared to what they had to say about each other! Rob's talk will be a survey of these men in the writings and recollections of their own peers and staff officers. Expect some heartfelt criticism, praise, and a few insights. Sometimes, what they say about one another reveals more about the speaker than the subject. This talk is intended to be entertaining as well as informative, a lighter than usual approach. Included will be some familiar and some lesser known officers in what will be presented as a slide show.

Robert Girardi possesses an M.A. in History from Loyola University. He is also a past president of the Civil War Round Table of Chicago, current Vice-President of the Salt Creek Civil War Roundtable, past newsletter editor of the SCCWRT, fellow of the Company of Military Historians, member of Northern Illinois and McHenry CWRT's, associate member of the Sons of Union Veterans, author-editor of 5 books, currently working on 3 more, numerous articles and other writings. This will be his 7<sup>th</sup> formal presentation to the SCCWRT.

The SCCWRT bids a rousing, and exceedingly fond, welcome to this gentleman, scholar, officer, and good friend. Our podium is honored.



## DECEMBER MEETING

BY

CINDY INTRAVARTOLO

On December 7<sup>th</sup>, Roger Bohn presented, "Anecdotes and Adventures of the Civil War Blockade", before 47 members and guests of the Salt Creek Civil War Roundtable.

On April 19<sup>th</sup>, 1861, President Lincoln issued a Proclamation of Blockade for all the South's seaports. Its purpose was to prevent the passage of much needed trade goods, supplies, and arms, to and from the Confederacy. For that, the Union had 42 commissioned ships and 207 men in ports along a coastline of 3,500 miles. Once the blockade was proclaimed, the going rate for cargo rapidly became \$400-500 per ton in gold.

In the previous facts, many entrepreneurs saw a chance for high profit with low risk. From the beginning, the majority of runners would be privately owned by enterprising, and not necessarily patriotic, southerners and Englishmen. Bohn told the stories of several who were typical of this class of men.

The first was a young Englishman named Thomas E. Taylor whose ship, the *Banshee*, made several successful runs between Nassau and

Wilmington earning a 700% profit for Taylor's trading company in England. On his first run, Taylor earned \$40,000 on the war materials he delivered into Wilmington, and \$155,000 on the tobacco and cotton he brought out. He made seven more trips before retiring to manage the company's blockade running fleet. His timing was exquisite as the *Banshee* was captured on her ninth run and turned into a Federal blockade ship.

Next, came the story of a blockader, the *USS Susquehanna*. The ship was built in Philadelphia and launched in 1850. During its career in the Civil War it captured 8 vessels and was awarded considerable prize money. It also participated in two assaults on Ft. Fisher. Her final tour was operating along the South Atlantic coast until the ship was brought to the New York Navy Yard in January of 1868 and decommissioned.

John Wilkinson was an unusual blockade runner in that he was motivated by patriotism rather than greed. In August of 1862, he was sent to England, by the Confederate government, with funds to purchase a suitable blockade runner. The ship

he purchased became known as the *R. E. Lee*. He made 15 runs between Wilmington and Nassau in 1862-3 but was captured in November of 1863. The *Lee* was then assigned to Union blockade duty. Wilkinson went to Bermuda where he made 21 runs carrying cotton to the British and arms to the Confederacy. After the war, Wilkinson was destitute. Ironically, he established a school at Annapolis, Md. to train candidates for the U.S. Naval Academy. He died there in 1891 at the age of 70.

Lastly, William Watson, "the poor man's" blockade runner sailed the Gulf of Mexico out of financial necessity. He had enlisted as a soldier, but was wounded at Corinth and discharged due to disability. He then purchased a vessel he named the *Rob Roy* and made several voyages back and forth from Galveston, TX to Havana and Mexico. He had many adventures before the end of the war and the end of the blockade on June 23, 1865.

The previously mentioned Tom Taylor stated that: "*Hunting, pig-sticking, steeple-chasing, big-game shooting, polo-I have done a little of each-all have their thrilling moments, but none can approach running a blockade.*" The audience gained an appreciation for what he was speaking of through the efforts of our presenter.

The SCCWRT thanks Roger Bohn for giving us a small glimpse of the pleasures and perils of blockade running.



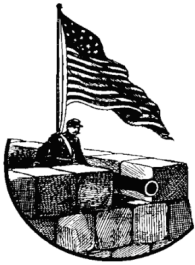
#### PRESERVATION REPORT BY LEN OVERCASH, SR.

SC – A Florida company has revived its plans for an upscale neighborhood, public golf course, and equestrian center on nearly 1,000 acres of untouched land along the Stono River. If approved, the development could lead to one of the priciest land deals ever on James Island. The Ginn Co. has submitted new plans to the city of Charleston for what is known as Grimball Farms, a 975 acre parcel it owns at the southeastern end of the island. (Charleston SC Post and Courier)

TN – Considered to be ground zero in the Battle of Franklin, the bullet-riddled walls of the Carter House will be bolstered one day by a \$4.5 million new interpretive center that historians and officials are counting on to keep the site a tourist destination. On Nov. 30, the 143<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the battle, officials announced their plan and a \$1.2 million state grant to jump-start the project. Now comes the hard part: raising the money needed to complete the work. (Nashville TN Tennessean)

VA – A Shenandoah County resident and a coalition of conservation groups working in the northern Shenandoah Valley, filed suit

December 17 in federal district court to prevent the Virginia Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration from implementing a plan to widen I-81 to eight or more lanes, an expansion to be funded by federal funds and tolls on cars and trucks. (press release)  
Source: [www.civilwarinteractive.com](http://www.civilwarinteractive.com)



#### ALL FOR THE UNION

As a result of the elections held at the December meeting, a new slate of leadership has taken the helm. Those elected will become apparent later on in this newsletter. Special thanks to Rick Zarr for 4 years of energetic and conscientious performance in the president's role. Congratulations to all those chosen! It's not really all that bad!



#### EDITOR'S NOTES

The next board meeting will be held at the home of Mary Lord, 200 Village Dr., Apt. 341, Downers Grove, IL. 7:30 PM, 1/29/08. Phone: 630-769-6182.

Since it is the beginning of a new year: All opinions expressed in this newsletter are strictly those of the editor, and not necessarily those of the Salt Creek Civil War Round

Table, its Board of Directors, officers, or general membership.

#### CALENDAR OF EVENTS

February 1-Bjorn Skaptason-Shiloh  
March 7-Eric Girardi-69<sup>th</sup> New York State Volunteers of the Irish Brigade  
April 4 -Phil Angelo-Allan Pinkerton  
May 2- General Book Discussion  
June 20-Cricket Bauer Pohanka-TBA  
September 5-Stephen Munier-The Lincoln-Douglas Debates of 1858.  
October 3-Tony Cichantk-Civilians of Gettysburg  
November 7-Annual Battlefield Preservation Auction.  
December 5-'Show and Tell'-Memorabilia Night  
January 2-Maryann Oblack-Lt. Col. Arthur J. Fremantle: Coldstream Guards.

#### THE SALT CREEK CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE

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

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