



# THE drum roll

Volume 37 359th Regular Meeting  
Number 8 April 5, 2019

*A rare look into a private history few have seen*

Friday, April 5, 2019, 7:30 p.m.

Arlington Heights Memorial Library  
500 North Dunton Avenue, Arlington Heights, Illinois

## Origins of the Longstreet Controversy



Dan Paterson

**D**an Paterson is a great-grandson of Lieutenant General James Longstreet, C.S.A. He was born in Washington, DC, and has lived most of his life in Maryland and Virginia. Professionally, he is a network operations specialist for Digital Intelligence Systems, Chantilly, VA. However, he has also dedicated a good portion of his life to educating the public in his well-known ancestor and is an avid Civil War reenactor who performs both Union and Confederate roles with the 7th Maryland Volunteers, Co. A (Federal), the Chesapeake Volunteer Guard, the Hardtack Society, and Liberty Rifles.

Paterson is the past president and a current member of the Bull Run Civil War Round Table, Centreville, VA, board member of the Longstreet Society, Gainesville, GA (Piedmont Hotel Renovation Project), and board member of the Pickett Society, Richmond, VA. He is a recipient of the

United Daughters of the Confederacy Jefferson Davis Award for preservation of Confederate heritage and also the 2001 Helen Dortch Longstreet Award presented by the Longstreet Society to those who work to defend and preserve General Longstreet's reputation.

He is a great-grandson of James Longstreet through his youngest son, Fitz Randolph Longstreet, whose daughter, his mother, was Jamie Louise Longstreet Paterson. His grandmother, Mrs. F. R. Longstreet (Zelia Stover Longstreet), was interviewed by *Blue and Gray* magazine in 1983 for an article titled "Daughter-in-Law of a General." His uncle, William Longstreet, was the last male descendant of the general with the surname of Longstreet.

At the meeting on April 5, 2019, Paterson will discuss the origins of the Longstreet controversy, looking at the timeline of events in the postwar period and how James Longstreet became the South's most controversial soldier and a victim of the growing Lost Cause narratives. Much of this controversy actually pre-dated the Gettysburg controversy, but also targeted him for support of black suffrage and his membership in and support for the Republican Party. The presentation also includes family photographs, newspaper clippings, and even photographs from the general's personal photo album not published in any work, spanning two centuries and several wars.

Paterson's presentation will be a rare look into a private history few have seen.

If you would like to join us for dinner with Dan Paterson at 5:30 p.m. before the meeting on April 5 at Sam's of Arlington restaurant, 1863 West Central Road, Arlington Heights, please contact Wayne Rhine at waynerhine@gmail.com or (847) 363-0875 by Wednesday, April 3.

**The April meeting will be back at Arlington Heights Memorial Library**

# Illinois Prisoner of War Camps

By Pat McCormick

**A**mong the most tragic aspects of the Civil War were the prisoner-of-war (POW) camps. On March 1, 2019, Robert Girardi presented the round table with the story of Illinois's part in this saga.

Like the rest of the country, Illinois was ill-prepared to receive enemy prisoners. One pre-war facility existed, in Alton, and it was already in disuse at the conflict's start. It had been the first prison complex constructed in the state (and in fact the first publicly funded building in Illinois history). It was poorly sited near the Mississippi River's high-water line; the hospital was in the basement and thus subject to regular flooding. The prison was damp and unhealthy, sanitation was poor, and there was no well (water had to be carted from the river).

In 1847 Dorothea Dix (later head of nursing in the Army during the Civil War) reported that "no amount of money" could fix the Alton facility, and by 1860 the new penitentiary in Joliet replaced it. But in the fall of 1861 space was needed for Confederate prisoners, and the Alton prison was re-opened. Fires were set in the cells to burn out the dampness (without success), the facility was declared "fine" upon inspection by engineering officer (and future general) James B. McPherson, and it began to receive prisoners (particularly after Fort Henry and Island Number 10 surrendered in early 1862). Overcrowding, illness, weather, and sanitation were major problems, especially a smallpox epidemic that killed around 1,000 prisoners. Eventually the infected were moved to an island in the Mississippi River, which became known as Smallpox Island.

The second Illinois POW camp was at Camp Butler in Springfield. Initially established as a training camp for new Illinois recruits, Butler was on 40 acres of land with lots of woodlots and a small lake. It was not designed to hold prisoners, but after the fall of Fort Donelson (February 1862) created a need for POW space, a separate stockade was arranged. It was poorly sited, on low, swampy ground, and initially had neither

walls (the stockade not being completed until May) nor guards. Consequently, escapes were common at first. After security tightened, Camp Butler was still plagued by many of the same problems as Alton: sanitation, illness, and weather (ill-clad Southerners arrived unprepared for harsh Midwestern winters).

Adding to the troubles were inexperienced and/or vindictive camp commandants such as William F. Lynch; a former POW himself, he used his position as payback to the enemy. Eventually Camp Butler closed in May 1863, after some 13 months in operation. Of its prison population, 866 are still buried there; meanwhile 203 escaped, and 339 "galvanized" (enlisted in the Union Army and went west to fight Indians, freeing others to come east and join the war). There are also 776 Union graves at Camp Butler National Cemetery, most of them from the training camps.

Also originally built as a training facility was the most famous of Illinois's POW camps: Camp Douglas in Chicago (so named because the facility was built on the estate of Illinois political giant Stephen A. Douglas). As with Camp Butler, Union successes in early 1862 resulted in a POW camp being added to the facility (as Girardi mentioned, we're seeing a trend here). Like Butler, the Chicago site was placed on low, poorly drained ground, producing the usual problems of sickness, sanitation, and overcrowding.

The initial batch of prisoners was around 4,000; maximum capacity was about 6,000 POWs, but the actual population was usually larger. One unusual feature of Camp Douglas was an observation platform placed outside the prison wall. Civilians could pay 10 cents to mount the platform and gawk at the captive population, as if they were visiting a zoo. The prison pen was described as being like a cattle yard.

Rebels had the usual option of "galvanizing" and going west to fight Indians; the most famous of these was Henry Morton Stanley, the future explorer/journalist of "Dr. Livingston, I presume" fame. And of course escape attempts were com-

mon; particularly troublesome were captives from John Hunt Morgan's ill-fated cavalry raid into Indiana and Ohio. Even Union soldiers were held at Camp Douglas, paroled prisoners who had not been exchanged and thus could not go back to the front until their exchanges came through. (There was even a revolt among these Union men.)

Douglas was plagued with a succession of 12 commandants (none of them good) and inadequate hospital space. (And Chicago winters were no better than those in Springfield.) The mortality rate at Douglas was among the worst on either side, albeit still below the Southern pens in Andersonville and Salisbury. Record keeping was poor, and estimates of the Douglas residents who died range from under 4,000 to over 6,000. Post-bellum, Camp Douglas was razed, leaving virtually no trace. A monument to the Confederate dead was erected in Oakwood Cemetery in 1895 — the first Confederate monument erected in the North — but the prison itself was not memorialized until 1991.

The final Illinois camp was established in summer 1863 at Rock Island, in the vicinity of the arsenal. It was the only Illinois POW camp that was designed as such from the ground up; it had a 12-foot wall, sentry boxes every 100 feet, and a "dead line" beyond which prisoners would be shot if they trespassed. It was designed to house 10,000 men, and unlike the other Illinois camps it was usually under capacity, averaging 8,600 residents. (Its most famous prisoner was fictional: Ashley Wilkes of *Gone with the Wind* fame.) The use of members of the 108th U.S. Colored Troops as guards created more than the usual tensions among the Confederate prisoners. And despite its advantages over the other institutions, Rock Island still had its share of disease and death; 1,960 POWs and 125 guards are buried there today.

Overall, some 55,000-plus Confederates were held in Illinois camps, with almost 10,400 deaths. This sad legacy needs to be remembered, and on behalf of the round table I would like to thank Robert Girardi for reminding us.



## April Saturday Discussion

All members and guests are invited to participate in the session to be held at the Barrington Area Library, 505 North Northwest Highway, Barrington, on Saturday, April 20, from 10:00 a.m. until noon. Pat McCormick will lead the discussion on the Chickamauga Campaign.

These discussions are generally held on the third Saturday of the month from September through June. They are held to generate and foster a free exchange of ideas on Civil War events.

## April Events

**April 9, McHenry County Civil War Round Table.** Trevor Steinbach on Civil War Medicine.

**April 12, Second Friday Lecture Series,** Civil War Museum, Kenosha, WI. Steve Krolick will speak on the History of Firearms, 1300–1870, and display examples of these firearms for attendees to see, noon. Free program is sponsored by the Milwaukee Civil War Round Table and the Iron Brigade Association. Information on all Civil War Museum programs is available at (262) 653-4140 or [www.thecivilwarmuseum.org](http://www.thecivilwarmuseum.org).

**April 12, Chicago Civil War Round Table.** Brad Gottfried will speak on Maps of the Fredericksburg Campaign.

**April 17, Civil War Museum,** Kenosha, WI. Larry Tagg will speak on the Generals of Shiloh, noon.

**April 19, Salt Creek Civil War Round Table.** John Matuszek will speak on Sherman's Working Battery: History of the 1st Illinois Light Artillery, Battery H.

**April 26, Family Day,** Civil War Museum, Kenosha, WI. Free family event features interactive activities that celebrate the life, generalship, and presidency of General Ulysses S. Grant, 1–4 p.m.

## Women's Civil War Book Club

The Civil War book club for women will meet at the home of Denise Limburg at 2 p.m. on Saturday, June 8, to discuss *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott. If you are interested in joining the group, contact Denise Limburg at (847) 212-5313 or [dlimburg@prodigy.net](mailto:dlimburg@prodigy.net) or Mary Banks at (847) 497-3149 or [zeller1@comcast.net](mailto:zeller1@comcast.net).



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### Appointed Positions

Book Raffle	Charles Banks
Newsletter Editor	Sally Smith

## Book Raffle

The lucky winners at the March book raffle were Alfred Kitch, who won *Yankee Blitzkrieg: Wilson's Raid Through Alabama and Georgia* by James Pickett Jones; Mike Brown, who won *Lee Moves North* by Michael A. Palmer; Janet Linhart, who won *As If It Were Glory: Robert Beecham's Civil War from the Iron Brigade to the Black Regiments* edited by Michael E. Stevens; David Noe, who won *The Military Memoirs of General John Pope* edited by Peter Cozzens and Robert Girardi; and Vernon Blessing, who won *Jeb Stuart: The Last Cavalier* by Burke Davis.

Congratulations to the winners and sincere thanks to the donors

## New Member

Kelsey Schumann  
Schaumburg, Illinois  
godgunsandgrit1776@gmail.com

## Eisenhower Library Discussion

The Civil War discussion group at the Eisenhower Library, 4613 North Oketo Avenue, Harwood Heights, meets on the first Saturday of the month from 10:00 to 11:30 a.m. On April 6, 2019, the group will discuss the Appomattox Campaign.

## 2018–2019 Speakers

**May 3**, Bruce Allardice on 'Damn the Torpedoes': Hi-Tech Rebs and Their Infernal Machines.

**June 7**, Matthew Switlick on Loomis Battery.



To learn more about the Northern Illinois Civil War Round Table  
visit our website at [www.northernilcwrt.org](http://www.northernilcwrt.org)