



THE NORTHERN ILLINOIS CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

THE drum roll

366th Regular Meeting

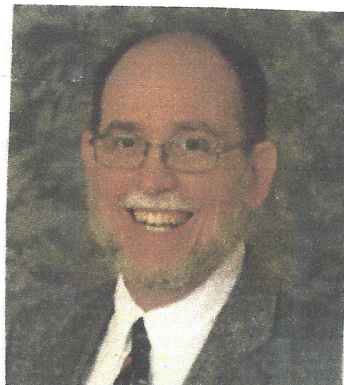
Volume 38 Number 4 January 3, 2020

The Most Common Motive of Iowans Who Severed the Confederacy

**The January 3, 2020 meeting
will be at the Arlington Heights
Historical Museum, 110 W.
Fremont Street at 7:30 P.M.**

If you would like to join us for dinner with David Connon at 5:30 p.m. before the meeting on January 3 at Sam's of Arlington restaurant, 1863 West Central Road, Arlington Heights, please contact Wayne Rhine at (847) 363-0875 or waynerhine@gmail.com by Jan. 1.

IOWANS WHO SERVED THE CONFEDERACY



David Connon will share five stories of Iowans who joined the Confederacy. He follows their pre-war, wartime and post-war experiences. Seventy-six men from Iowa actually served in the southern army. His stories will also shed light on the ramifications for family relationships and emotional and political pressures in Iowa during the war.

David Connon has spent nearly two decades researching dissenters in Iowa: Grinnell residents who helped on the Underground Railroad, and their polar opposites, Iowa Confederates. He shares some of these stories with audiences across the state through the Humanities Iowa speakers Bureau. He has worked as an interpreter at Living History Farms for ten seasons. Connon is a member of the Sons of Union Veterans, an associate member of Sons of Confederate Veterans, and a member of the Des Moines Civil War Round Table.

To Contribute to the Drum Roll

All members are welcome to contribute to the newsletter. Appropriate subjects include book reviews, family histories, travel reports, and recent research. If you have information to share, please send it to Denise Limburg, 451 Woodview Road, Lake Barrington, IL 60010, (847) 212-5313, dlimburg@prodigy.net

Leonidas Polk in Kentucky, 1861

By Pat McCormick

Confederate general Leonidas Polk's military career was not particularly impressive. Many consider one of his cardinal sins (or at least "Bishop" sins) to be his unilateral occupation of Columbus, Kentucky in fall 1861, ending Kentucky's neutrality. On December 6, Robert Girardi put that notion to the test.

Girardi started with a brief summary of Polk's background. Leonidas Polk was born in 1806 to a wealthy family, becoming used to the lap of luxury and developing an inflated sense of his own self-worth. Although his attitude got him in some trouble at West Point, he did graduate, and in the process became fast friends with fellow cadets Albert Sidney Johnston and Jefferson Davis – the latter, in particular, idolized him (which explains a lot about their future Civil War relationship.)

Polk also became deeply involved in religion, and upon graduation he resigned the army and joined the Episcopal ministry. By spring 1861, he was the Episcopal Bishop of Louisiana, and well known in what would become the western Confederacy. A month or so into the Civil War, Tennessee governor Isham Harris asked Polk to carry Western concerns to Davis, now the Confederate President. This led directly to Polk's appointment as a Major General in the Confederate army, and his assignment to the Western command (pending the arrival of his old friend Johnston from California.)

Key to the Western theater was the border state of Kentucky. Geography made the state critical. Confederate possession gave the South a buffer against the North, as well as a 700-mile Ohio River border that could be used to threaten the Midwest. In Union hands, the Ohio frontier would be protected, while the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers would present an invasion avenue into the Confederate heartland. A slave state with strong ties to the Union, Kentucky was divided in sentiment, declaring itself neutral at the outset of the war. Understanding its importance (Abraham Lincoln declared, "To lose Kentucky is nearly the same as to lose the whole game"), both sides at first respected Kentucky's neutrality, at least on the surface.

As 1861 progressed, however, neutrality was eroding. Both sides initially established recruiting camps outside state borders, but soon Union general "Bull" Nelson established Camp Dick Robinson within Kentucky, smuggling muskets in and outfitting pro-Northern troops. As a counter, pro-Confederate leader Simon Bolivar Buckner established a South-leaning State Guard. Buckner's outfit was eventually disbanded, as Kentucky began leaning more pro-Union. Meanwhile, from his headquarters at Cairo, Illinois, Union brigadier Ulysses S. Grant was assembling enough strength to occupy Kentucky when the time was right.

Polk saw the situation as critical, and moved to head off any Union advantage in the area. On September 3, he unilaterally moved into Kentucky, occupying Columbus and Hickman. (The former was the most defensible spot on the Mississippi north of Memphis, its high bluffs making it an ideal spot to fortify. With 143 heavy guns eventually moved in, Columbus became known as the "Gibraltar of the West.") In response, two days later Grant seized Paducah and Smithland, thus controlling the mouths of the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers. Since Polk had moved first, he was seen as the aggressor, and what little neutrality was left in Kentucky evaporated – it was now on the Union side.

Polk's occupation of Kentucky has often been characterized as nothing short of disastrous; at least one historian stated that the South lost the war "the moment Polk crossed the line." However, as Girardi related, this wasn't quite the case. Kentucky's neutrality was all but gone by this time anyway; the pro-Union government had successfully checked pro-Confederate governor Beriah Magoffin, and its addition to the Union effort was all but certain. Girardi pointed out Polk's real mistake: having decided to enter the state, Polk should have gone all-in and grabbed Paducah and Smithfield as well. Moreover, while Polk did not have permission for the invasion, Jefferson Davis bore some of the responsibility – he had given Polk this command, knowing who Polk was (and thus that Polk might very well act on his own.)

On behalf of the Round Table, I would like to thank Robert Girardi for a compelling exploration of Leonidas Polk's reputed Kentucky miscue.

Upcoming Events

Jan. 10 – Chicago Civil War Round Table
“Heroines of Mercy Street: Nurses
in the Civil War”

Speaker: Pam Toler

Jan. 10 – Kenosha Civil War Museum
“Iowa Confederates: The Forgotten
Iowans of the Civil War”
Speaker – David Connon

Jan. 17 – Salt Creek Round Table
“The Battle of Honey Springs”
Speaker: Art Foley

Jan. 25 - Kenosha Civil War Museum
“Harriet Tubman: Alive and Free”
Presenter: Pamela Welcome

Women's Civil War Book Club

The Women's Book Club will meet on
Saturday, January 18, 2020 at Connie
Rawa's (The Grand), 920 E. Northwest
Hwy., Palatine at 2:00 p.m. The book
Being is Cold Mountain by Charles Frazier.
If you are interested in joining the group,
contact Denise Limburg at (847) 2125313
or dlimburg@prodigy.net or Mary Banks
at (847)497-3149 or zeller@comcast.net.

Saturday Discussion

All members and guests are invited to
Participate in the session to be held at the
Barrington Area Library, 505 North North-
west Highway, Barrington, on Saturday,
January 18, 2020 from 10:00 a.m. until noon.
All attendees are invited to bring one or two
of their favorite Civil War books or books on
the Civil War they have read recently to share
with the group.

These discussions are generally held on the
third Saturday of the month from September
through June.

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
until 11:30 a.m. On January 4, they will
continue discussing all things naval.



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Appointed Positions

Book Raffle	Charles Banks
Newsletter Editor	Denise Limburg

Book Raffle

The winners of the November book raffle were Wayne Rhine, who won *Crisis at the Crossroads* by William W. Hassler, Jr.; Jim Spannagel, who won *Civil War Medicine* by Robert E. Denney; Ezra Maras, who won *Ulysses S. Grant-Essays and Documents* edited by David L. Wilson and John Y. Simon and *Lee Moves North* by Michael A. Palmer; Alisa Corsi, who won *Statesmen of the Lost Cause* by Burton J. Hendrick; Harold Chinick, who won *William Tecumseh Sherman Memoirs*.

Congratulations to the winners and thanks to the donors.

2019 – 2020 SPEAKERS

January 3	David Connon	Iowa Confederates
February 6	Wayne Rhine	Chicago Battery
March 6	Bruce Allardice	TBD
April 3	Jack Hudson	Telegraphs in the Civil War
May 1	Kathyrin Harris	Harriet Tubman
June 5	Max Daniels	President Lincoln: A Press Conference



To learn more about the Northern Illinois Civil War Round Table
visit our website at www.northernilcwrt.org