



THE NORTHERN ILLINOIS CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

THE drum roll

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DUE TO CIRCUMSTANCES ASSOCIATED WITH COVID-19, THE MAY 1ST GENERAL MEETING AND THE JUNE 5TH BANQUET HAVE BEEN CANCELLED AS WELL AS THE MAY AND JUNE SATURDAY DISCUSSIONS.

THE NORTHERN ILLINOIS CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE WILL RECONVENE IN SEPTEMBER.

Elections will be held at that time. If you are interested in joining the Board, please contact Wayne Rhine at waynerhine@gmail.com or 547/363-0875.

Please see the back page of this newsletter for the great speakers and programs that Laurie Schiller has planned for us in the future.

Dues renewal forms will be included in the June newsletter.

Stay safe and healthy! See you in September!

Black Jack Logan
by Pat McCormick

May is a month which includes a national holiday directly traceable to the Civil War – namely, Memorial Day. So this month let's take a closer look at the man who, as much as any individual can be given credit, is responsible for the holiday: Union general John "Black Jack" Logan.

John A. Logan was born in southern Illinois on February 9, 1826. His father, also named John, was a prominent doctor as well as politician (for whom Logan County – along I-55 between Chicago and Springfield – is named.) This allowed John and his siblings the opportunity for a better education than their father had received. An energetic youth, John was a good, if at times distracted, student.

The area of Illinois that Logan grew up in was - and still is - known as Egypt, or Little Egypt. It was settled largely by southerners, and while slavery was illegal in the state, indentured servitude was not – in fact, for a time the Logans held the service of an African-American servant. As Logan grew to manhood and (naturally) entered law and politics, he was very much a man of his region. In the Illinois legislature in 1854, he was the chief driver behind an effort to ban free blacks from settling in the state (new arrivals, that is – those already in Illinois were allowed to stay.) Going back home to continue his law practice, Logan remained a champion of the Fugitive Slave Act, the Kansas-Nebraska Act, and Stephen A. Douglas. Subsequently, when he was elected to the U.S. House of representatives in 1858, it was as an up-and-coming Democrat – one who swore he would never affiliate himself with the new Republican Party.

As the country moved towards a break in 1860, Logan was re-elected for a second term. He was anti-secession but sympathetic to the South, and hated abolitionism. Thus, in the midst of the split, Logan favored compromise. This generally played well at first, especially in his home district. But by the time the war itself commenced, he was accused - incorrectly - of actively championing anti-Union activity in Egypt (it did not help that one of his brothers-in-law went south of the Ohio to join Confederate forces.) Under pressure to take a stand, Logan came down firmly in support of the Union. Along with fellow War Democrat John McClernand, Logan made a rousing speech to members of the 21st Illinois Volunteers, many of whom were resistant to transferring into Federal service for three years. Logan's effort was credited by the unit's commander, Colonel Ulysses S. Grant, with inspiring the near-unanimous transfer.

Soon after Logan and his fellow Congressmen began an emergency session called by President Lincoln, Northern forces moved towards Manassas, Virginia to strike the Southern army there. Along with many of his fellow politicians, Logan traveled with the army to observe the action. On July 18, during a skirmish at Blackburn's Ford, the Illinois Congressman grabbed a musket and joined the skirmish. It is thus no surprise that, as soon as his political duties wrapped up, Logan returned to Egypt and recruited the 31st Illinois Volunteers, with himself as colonel.

The "Dirty-First," as Logan fondly christened his rough-and-tumble command, saw its first serious action at Belmont in November of 1861. When, after the initial Union success, Confederate reinforcements blocked the way back to the Federal transports, Logan spearheaded the breakthrough that opened a path to safety. The following February at Fort Donelson, the "Dirty-First" stood firm in the teeth of a strong Rebel attack before being forced back along with the rest of John McClernand's division. In the process, Logan took three wounds, one of them bad enough that he was initially reported as killed. His wife, Mary, accompanied him back home and devotedly nursed him back to health. While recuperating, Logan received word that he had been promoted to brigadier general. This required him to resign from Congress (the highest rank a sitting Congressman could legally hold was colonel), which he readily agreed to do.

Logan returned to Grant's Army of the Tennessee in time to participate in the snail-like post-Shiloh advance on Corinth, Mississippi. Following that campaign, he was tasked with occupying Jackson, Tennessee, and shortly thereafter was given command of a full division. Until the spring of 1863, Logan's command was in the rear areas of the army; it was eventually moved to Memphis, and Logan himself was promoted to major general (aided by U.S. Grant's influence) in March of 1863. Throughout this period of time, Logan's attitude toward slavery began to soften with up-close exposure to the "peculiar institution." Although far from an abolitionist, he was no longer actively opposed to that philosophy, and he was concerned about disloyal rumblings from his home region (and even from within his old regiment, the 31st Illinois) following announcement of the Emancipation Proclamation. In early 1863 the adjutant general of the Army, Lorenzo Thomas, visited the Western troops to explain the administration's new policy of enlisting black soldiers, and Logan came out fully in support of the measure.

At the beginning of May, Logan's division (now the 3rd Division of James McPherson's 17th Corps) crossed the Mississippi as part of Grant's three-week lightning campaign through Mississippi. Now was the time to justify Grant's support of his major generalship, and Logan proved fully up to the task. After hard fighting in the battles of Port Gibson and Raymond, Logan shone most brightly at Champion Hill on May 16. His attack on the Confederate left met with considerable success, despite rough terrain - at one point Grant exclaimed, "Tell General Logan he is making history today!" - and, for a time, unknowingly cut off the main Confederate retreat route until actions elsewhere on the field forced an adjustment in his deployment.

During the siege of Vicksburg, Logan's division occupied a position where the Jackson Road led into the Mississippi fortress. In June, his division mined under the opposing Confederate works, detonating the mine on the 25th of the month, but was unable to break through the defenses. (A second mine attack was executed on July 1, with no more success than the first one.) Vicksburg surrendered on July 4, 1863; Logan's division was given the honor of leading the victors into the city. Following the Federal reversal at Chickamauga, Grant was elevated to command of the war effort between the Appalachians and the Mississippi, and William T. Sherman was elevated to command of the Army of the Tennessee. This created a vacancy at the head of Sherman's 15th Corps, and while Logan was a member of a different corps, he was given the job - a clear case of merit-based promotion. He

was unable to join his new command until after the battles for Chattanooga, but when the Atlanta campaign stepped off in May of 1864, he was ready to go. Logan and the 15th Corps distinguished themselves at Resaca and Dallas (though their effort at Kennesaw Mountain was no more a success than that of the other blue-clad attackers.) Dallas was a particularly impressive moment: Under a sharp Confederate attack, he personally rallied wavering troops, and the tough Westerners of the 15th Corps held their ground.

Dallas, though, was but a warm-up for John Logan. The high point of his military career came at the Battle of Atlanta on July 22, 1864. Atlanta's Rebel defenders struck the flank of the Army of the Tennessee at mid-day, placing the entire army in peril. Logan's corps was at the opposite end of the line, and at first was not directly assailed. But the army's commander, James McPherson, was killed early in the struggle, and Logan was notified that he now led the army. He quickly sent portions of his corps to the other flank and confirmed that his fellow corps commanders had things in hand. Meanwhile, more Southerners now charged upon the 15th Corps front, finding a weak spot along the Georgia Railroad and breaking a hole in the defenses. Logan came flying back to the 15th Corps, with reinforcements following. He chanted "McPherson and Revenge" as he exhorted the troops; they responded in kind with chants of the general's nickname, "Black Jack! Black Jack!" Logan's military acumen and dynamic presence were key to retrieving the situation; as one soldier recorded, "...only those who have seen the new energy infused into disheartened and outnumbered troops by a single man can appreciate the value of a leader such as was John A. Logan."

It seemed Logan had earned command of the Army of the Tennessee with his July 22 performance, but Sherman saw things differently. He instead elevated Oliver O. Howard (whose combat resume paled in comparison to Logan's) from corps command in the Army of the Cumberland to McPherson's vacated position. Sherman apparently preferred to have a West Point professional in the spot, rather than an amateur (even a talented amateur); certainly Logan saw it that way, referring to Sherman as "an infernal brute" in a letter to his wife. To his credit however, Logan made no public protest, returning to his corps command and continuing to fight hard at Ezra Church and Jonesboro. (Contrast this to fellow corps commanders Joseph Hooker and John Palmer, both of whom resigned in mid-campaign because of real or perceived slights.)

Following the fall of Atlanta, Logan was recalled to the home front to campaign for Lincoln and the Republicans (at the request of the President himself, no less.) He thus missed the March to the Sea, but almost led different troops at Nashville in December. U.S. Grant, with none of Sherman's reservations about Logan, tapped him to replace George Thomas, but before Logan arrived Thomas crushed the Rebel foe, and the order stayed in Logan's pocket. He rejoined his command in Savannah in early 1865 for the march through the Carolinas. It was his 15th Corps that captured Columbia, South Carolina in February, and whose troops contributed to the burning of the town; the men went well beyond Logan's orders, seemingly out of his control. But that was the only blot on Logan's 1865 record. (In fact, when some Army of the Tennessee men set out to burn Raleigh, NC after learning of Lincoln's assassination, Logan headed them off and halted the attempt.)

Soon after the close of hostilities, Logan re-entered the House of Representatives for several terms – now as a Republican, a member of the party he once swore he would never affiliate with. He was one of the House managers of Andrew Johnson's impeachment, and it was Logan who officially placed Grant's name in nomination for President in 1868. Meanwhile, he became the head of the Union soldiers' veterans association, the Grand Army of the Republic, and in this role he became the key figure in the establishment of Decoration Day (now Memorial Day.) From the House, Logan moved to the Senate, becoming one of the most powerful Republican senators. Although a champion of veterans' rights, especially pensions, Logan also attempted to legislate against West Point – he never did forget the slight at Atlanta. He also continued to champion black rights, even after it was no longer seen as politically expedient by his fellow party members. This was a remarkable about-face from his pre-war attitudes towards African-Americans.

Logan was the Republican Vice-Presidential candidate in the election of 1884 but his ticket, led by James G. Blaine, lost to Grover Cleveland. He was considered a frontrunner for the 1888 Presidential nomination (the Atlanta Cyclorama, in which Logan is the central figure, was at least partially intended as a campaign vehicle), but he died of "cerebral rheumatism" on December 26, 1886. He left behind an impressive legacy; just here in Chicago we have Logan Boulevard, Logan Square, and a Logan statue in Grant Park, while in southern Illinois there is a John A. Logan college and a Logan museum. But the most lasting memorial to John A. Logan is celebrated near the end of every May.



THE drum roll

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The friend in my adversity I shall cherish most. I can better trust those who helped me to relieve the gloom of my dark hours than those who are so ready to enjoy with me the sunshine of my prosperity.

Ulysses S. Grant

2020-2021 SPEAKERS

Sept 4	Paula Zalar	Death and Mourning During the Civil War
Oct. 2	David Keller	Camp Douglas
Nov. 8	Laurie Schiller	David Stuart and the Burch divorce trial of 1861
Dec. 4	Tim Smith	Grierson's Raid
Jan. 8	Doug Dammann	1 st Wisconsin
Feb. 5	Mike Powell	African Americans in the U.S. Navy
Mar. 5	Bruce Allardice	TBD
Apr. 2	Pamela Toler	Nursing in the Civil War
May 7	Eric Wittenberg	Tullahoma or Chickamauga
June 4	Curt Fields	Portrayal of General Grant

