



THE drum roll

363rd Regular Meeting

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October 4, 2019

The Mascot of the 8th Wisconsin

Friday, October 4, 2019, 7:30 p.m.

Arlington Heights Historical Museum
110 West Fremont Street, Arlington Heights, Illinois

YANKEE BUZZARD REGIMENT



Jerry Allen

The Iron Brigade is the most celebrated Civil War unit from Wisconsin, however, that fame is spread among three regiments. When it comes to an individual regiment, the most famous is the 6th Wisconsin Infantry Regiment. Then we look at war records and statistics, the 8th Wisconsin is a bit above average among the Wisconsin regiments. However, this regiment had the most famous mascot of any Civil War unit. Old Abe was a young bald eagle that served for three years with the 8th Wisconsin. Many Civil War units carried with them some pet or mascot. However, a soldier from Peoria who served in the 47th Illinois put it best when he wrote "other regiments had dogs, cows, goats...There was only one Old Abe!" Some of this fame came from being named after President Lincoln and from the fact that our national bird is the bald eagle. But for the most part, Old Abe's popularity was the result of knowing how to work a crowd and draw attention.

Another reason for Old Abe's fame is that many people chose to embellish his story with imaginary feats. Old Abe became a super hero with powers beyond that of any mortal eagle. The eagle is credited with saving the day at some battles. Some accounts have Old Abe delivering crucial "airmail" messages. There are stories of the eagle disrupting enemy attacks and soaring over battle fields to drop projectiles on Confederate heads.

Confederate soldiers and sympathizers were not fond of Old Abe. They gave the eagle various derisive names. Probably the worst was "Yankee Buzzard". But Old Abe was above the name calling and proudly carried on.

But, Old Abe is not the total story of the 8th Wisconsin. Our own Jerry Allen will talk to us about the various soldiers and leaders of the 8th and the experiences they had going off to war and fighting thirty-nine battles where they had successes and failures. Of the 1,342 who served in the 8th, 280 died and 188 were incapacitated by wounds and illness.

Jerry Allen grew up on a farm in LaCrosse County, Wisconsin with a predominantly Norwegian heritage. He attended the University of Wisconsin—LaCrosse (BS-Mathematics and Physics) and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (MS-Mathematics). Jerry retired six years ago after working 40 years as a pension consultant in Atlanta and Chicago. Jerry and his wife, Ellen, live in Cary, Illinois.

Although not a professional historian, Jerry has had a life-long interest in history with a special interest in the Civil War and American Indian conflicts. He has given talks on various topics with an emphasis on the Civil War experiences of people from Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. He is a member of various Civil War Round Tables and a past president of the Civil War Round Table of Chicago and the Northern Illinois Civil War Round Table.

If you would like to join us for dinner with Jerry Allen at 5:30 p.m. before the meeting on October 4 at Sam's of Arlington restaurant, 1863 West Central Road, Arlington Heights, please contact Wayne Rhine at (847)363-0875, wayrhine@gmail.com by Wednesday, October 2nd.

Civil War enthusiasts are well familiar with the term Lost Cause, as it relates to the Confederate States of America. But what precisely does the term Lost Cause signify, how did the concept arise, and how did it impact James Longstreet? On September 6, William Piston led the Round Table through the history of the Cause.

Piston started by mentioning the original "lost cause." The term was over a century old by the time the Civil War started, having been coined in regard to the Jacobite rebellion of 1745-46. In April, 1746, the primarily Scottish rebellion (led by Charles Stuart, known as "Bonnie Prince Charlie") was decisively defeated at Culloden. Following the end of the American rebellion of 1861-1865, the term seemed appropriate, and it did not take long for it to be adopted by the defeated; in 1866, Edward A. Pollard published, "The Lost Cause; A New Southern History of the War of the Confederates."

Over the decades immediately following the war, the Lost Cause mythology took root in the defeated South, and remained in ascendancy throughout much of the 20th Century. The essence of the Lost Cause was that the Confederacy had fought for a worthwhile ideal, and had been ultimately ground down by superior numbers and resources – an idea referenced by Robert E. Lee in his famous General Order Number 9, issued to the remnants of his Army of Northern Virginia the day after the Appomattox surrender. In service of this notion, the mythology tended to exaggerate Confederate successes and downplay its failures. A pantheon of Confederate leadership was established, with Lee at the pinnacle and the "martyred" Stonewall Jackson as his right-hand man. (Jefferson Davis, initially reviled by many due to failures both real and imagined, eventually took a place in the hierarchy.)

Of course, these hallowed heroes were not at fault – how could they be? – thus the emphasis on long odds and inadequate resources, as well as the characterization of Confederate generals (Eastern ones, anyway) as the greatest leaders on either side. As a corollary, this version of the war was Virginia-centric, since it

was there that the majority of Confederate military success had occurred., and where Lee, Jackson, Jeb Stuart and other luminaries had held forth. The Western theater, where Rebel fortunes had been nearly universally negative, was mostly ignored or glossed over. By the late 19th Century, this characterization had been institutionalized throughout the South by way of veterans' societies, magazines, memoirs, and textbooks. And what is now known as "the" Confederate flag, the familiar red flag with the blue star-studded cross, was firmly established as the primary symbol. This flag pattern had first been carried in Virginia, and was thus the symbol of Confederate military might.

The Lost Cause also had to establish that it had been a worthwhile endeavor. From the very beginning, slavery was plowed under the surface, and States Rights established as the reason for rebellion. The antebellum South was characterized as an agricultural Eden whose chivalrous ruling class, the planters, were straight out of the novels of Sir Walter Scott. Meanwhile the slaves were a content lot, picking cotton by day and singing joyfully at night. This ideal society had been sacrificed to Yankee tyranny, subsumed by money-grubbing industrialism. And the "fact" that the slaves had been a happily subservient class sustained the assumption of white supremacy – a notion maintained for a century by Jim Crow society (and, sadly, in the North as well, with "sundown towns" red-lining, and other prejudicial practices.)

How did all of this affect James Longstreet? The Lost Cause had established Lee as its faultless hero, an image late 20th Century historian Thomas Connelly referred to as the "marble man." As such, Lee could do no wrong, and those who suggested as much were anathema to the Cause. Longstreet dared to criticize Lee's performance in the Gettysburg campaign; an additional sin was that he eventually aligned himself with the Republican Party (the political arm of the Yankee oppressors), and was more interested in moving forward than looking backward. Staunch Lee defenders (and former Lee subordinates, as was Longstreet) Jubal Early, William Pendleton, and others leaped to the icon's defense. Early, Pendleton, and many of Lee's other "defenders" were also fellow Virginians; Longstreet was not. The efforts of Early et

al led to Longstreet being ostracized by the Lost Cause establishment, becoming a chief scapegoat for the loss at Gettysburg. (The charge that Longstreet was deliberately slow to attack on July 2, 1863, has held on stubbornly even as much of the rest of the Lost Cause has been discredited; it is still part of Gettysburg discussions to this day.) In response, late in life Longstreet himself published accounts that made their own dubious claims at times.

The Lost Cause heavily influenced Civil War scholarship for a century-plus; it was not until the 1970's that historians began to formally deconstruct the myth. In 1973 Rollin Osterweis, with "The Myth of the Lost Cause, 1865 - 1900," started the ball rolling. Connelly's "The Marble Man: Robert E. Lee and His Image in American Society" followed four years later. Since then, authors such as Charles Reagan Wilson, Carol Reardon, and Wallace Hettle have examined other aspects of the Lost Cause, as has Piston himself (with 1987's "Lee's Tarnished Lieutenant: James Longstreet and His Place in Southern History.") And in the last 15 years or so. Civil War memory has been a hot topic; Piston included a book list covering both Lost Cause and memory studies.

On behalf of the Round Table, I would like to thank William Piston for this illuminating dive into the Lost Cause. (And, frankly, for the book list, which aided this article immeasurably!)

October Saturday Discussion

All members and guests are invited to participate in the session to be held at the Old Orchard Club, 801 Butternut Lane, Mount Prospect, on Saturday, October 19, from 10:00 a.m. until noon. Pat McCormick will lead the discussion on the Tullahoma 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 the Civil War.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Sept. 28-Chicagoland Civil War&Military Expo
DuPage County Fairgrounds, Wheaton, IL

October 8 - McHenry Count CWRT
"1st Day at Gettysburg: The Cavalry"
Speaker: Laurence Schiller
Woodstock Public Library

October 11 - Chicago Civil War Round Table
"Battlefield Preservation"
Speaker: Jim Lighthizer
Holiday Inn O'Hare

October 11 - Kenosha Civil War Museum
Benjamin F. Butler: A Man with Many
Nicknames"
Speaker: Ron Carlson

October 18 - Salt Creek Civil War Round Table
Annual Battlefield Preservation Book Sale
"Lincoln on Immigration and America's
Place in the World"
Speaker: Kevin Wood as Abraham Lincoln
Glen Ellyn History Center

EISENHOWER LIBRARY DISCUSSION

The Civil War discussion group at the Eisenhower Library, 4613 Oketo Avenue, Harwood Heights, meets the first Saturday Of the month from 10:00 to 11:30 a.m. On October 5 the group will discuss the Perryville Campaign.

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



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SEPTEMBER BOOK RAFFLE

The winners were Mike Brown, who won *The American Civil War* by Thomas E. Griesse; Phil Thornton, who won *General George E. Pickett in Life and Legend* by Lesley J. Gordon; Sam Krauss, who won *Lee's Maverick General* by Hal Bridges; Paul Wydra, who won *One of Jackson's Foot Cavalry* by John H. Worsham; Walt Parus, who won *Antietam* by John Michael Priest; and Mary Beth Foley, who won *The Confederate Battle Flag* by John M. Costi.

Congratulations to the winners and thank you all the donors.

2019 – 2020 Speakers

October 4	Jerry Allen	8th Wisconsin Regiment
February 7	Wayne Rhine	Chicago Battery
April 10	Jack Hudson	Civil War Telegraphs



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